THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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GST KITTY SWELLS TO RECORD HIGH OF ₹2.43 LAKH CRORE IN APRIL

Gross GST collection rose 8.7 per cent in April as growth in import-led revenues outpaced domestic transactions, data showed on Friday

GST MOP-UP FROM IMPORTS RISES BY 25.8%

The previous all-time high GST collection was recorded in April last year at over ₹2.23 lakh crore. Gross revenues from domestic transactions were up 4.3 per cent to over ₹1.85 lakh crore, while GST mop-up from imports rose by a massive 25.8 per cent to ₹57,580 crore in April 2026. Union govt data showed refunds were up 19.3 per cent to ₹31,793 crore | P10

NEED TO INCENTIVISE LOCAL MANUFACTURING

- Total gross CGST and SGST collection in April stood at ₹52,140 crore and ₹61,331 crore, respectively. IGST mop-up was at ₹1.29 lakh cr
- EY India tax partner Saurabh Agarwal said there is a need to critically re-examine policy frameworks to incentivise domestic manufacturing and ensure 'Make in India' keeps pace with global supply chain shifts

7.3%

WAS THE JUMP IN NET GST MOP-UP AFTER ADJUSTING FOR REFUNDS

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Commercial LPG refill cost up by ₹933 a cylinder

Domestic LPG, petrol, diesel and aviation fuel price for domestic airlines untouched

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

DAYS after the latest cycle of polls in a few states ended, oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Friday passed on the global spike in fuel rates due to the West Asia crisis, to the consumers by raising the cost of commercial liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders by a whopping ₹933 per unit. They, however, left domestic LPG cylinders, petrol, diesel and aviation fuel price for domestic airlines untouched.

A 19 kg commercial LPG cylinder will now cost ₹3,071.50 in Delhi, up from ₹2,078 earlier. "Overall, approximately 80% of petroleum products have witnessed no change in prices, ensuring stability for the majority of consumers," Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) said in a statement. However, since commercial cylinders are used by hotels, restaurants, and other establishments, their impact cannot be ignored.

But OMCs said price revisions have been limited to select industrial segments, which form a small share of overall consumption and are subject to routine monthly adjustments based on global benchmarks. This includes bulk and commercial LPG cylinders (less than 1% of total consumption).

Crude oil prices in the international market have surged sharply, touching a four-year high on Thursday amid escalating tensions in West Asia and the continued blockade of the Strait of Hormuz — a critical global energy transit route. India, which imports nearly 88% of its crude oil needs, is heavily dependent on this corridor, accounting for about 40% of crude, 50% of LNG, and 90% of LPG imports. Despite this volatility, the government indicated that domestic supplies remain secure. Brent crude futures climbed to $126.41 per barrel — the highest since March 9, 2022 — while WTI crude touched $110.93 earlier in the day. Prices later eased, with Brent trading around $113 per barrel and WTI at $107 per barrel at 8.27 pm IST.

For his part, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri refuted charges that energy price may go up further in the near future as polls in several states are over. He said the energy prices are not linked to the elections.

Opposition demands rollback of LPG hike

The Opposition, including Congress, DMK, SP, and the Left parties, attacked the Narendra Modi government over the hike in the price of commercial LPG cylinders, with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi saying this is an "election bill" and the next "strike" will be on petrol and diesel | P7

Spl bench to hear TMC plea on counting today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi/Kolkata

A special bench of the Supreme Court will hear on Saturday a plea filed by All India Trinamool Congress against appointment of Central Government and Central PSU employees as counting supervisors and assistants for the West Bengal Assembly elections.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Friday approached the Supreme Court seeking permission to include West Bengal government employees as counting supervisors for the upcoming assembly election results.

The move came a day after the Calcutta High Court dismissed the party's plea challenging the order by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Under the EC's directive, issued through the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer, each counting table must include at least one supervisor drawn from the Central government or a PSU. AITC had contended that appointing counting supervisors and assistants from Central Government and Central PSU employee could lead to bias and that "the fiat lacks legal basis."

Following the urgency cited by the ruling TMC, a special bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justice Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha and Justice Joymalya Bagchi has been constituted to hear the matter. The hearing is expected to begin at 8 am.

Meanwhile, EC on Friday ordered a repoll at 11 polling booths in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district's Magrahat Paschim and four booths in Diamond Harbour assembly constituencies.

Polling in these constituencies were held in the second phase elections on April 29.

The ECI said it had received 32 complaints from Falta, 29 from DH, 13 from Magrahat, and three from Budge Budge in the district. Besides Magrahat, remaining three booths fall under the TMV's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee's Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency. Officials said that the complaints include allegations of EVM tampering and attempts to obstruct surveillance cameras. P8

Mumbai-Pune 'Missing Link'

- The much-awaited 13.3-km-long "Missing Link" project on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway was inaugurated by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday
- Built to bypass the steep mountain pass section, improve road safety and reduce travel distance, it connects Khopoli on the Mumbai side to Kusgaon near Lonavala in Pune dist
- The Missing Link project is expected to reduce the Mumbai-Pune travel distance by around 6 km and cut the journey time by 20 to 30 minutes, officials said

H5N1 scare in Tumakuru as samples of dead peacocks +ve

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Tumakuru

AVIAN influenza scare has hit rural Tumakuru as National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, has confirmed that about 40 wild peacocks that died in a span of 10 days in April second week were hit by the H5N1 virus.

Six persons, mostly farmers, are being treated symptomatically and quarantined in their homes apart from 26 forest officials who had handled the carcasses.

On Friday, Deputy Commissioner Subha Kalyan held an emergency meeting with the State Epidemic Diseases Awareness Committee and district-level officials. The DC asked the people not to panic and be alert.

The death of peacocks under suspicious circumstances was reported at Kolihalli forest in Urdigere hobli on April 16.

The DC said that the district administration had immediately formed a rapid response team (RRT) and took steps to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

Five villages of Urdigere hobli including Kolihalli, Ullenahalli, Bommanahalli, Bhyirasandra, and Kallalli villages and within a 10-kilometer radius around them are under intensive surveillance.

A team of officials from departments of forest, animal husbandry, health, Gram Panchayat and revenue is createing awareness among the public.

Meat and chicken shops in the area have been closed. "H5N1 virus is a serious infection and the public needs to be vigilant. If any unusual death of chickens is found in any poultry farms, the Smart City Control Room should be informed. Since the disease is likely to spread from wildlife, it is not possible to say how it spreads. After the Kolihalli incident, there has been no report of any death of peacocks. And it is not known that this disease has spread to domestic animals," the DC said. P5

Hike to make hotel food in Bengaluru scalding hot

GAYATHRI M KURUP @ Bengaluru

GET ready to pay more for your meals as hotels across Bengaluru are contemplating revising food prices following a steep Rs 993 hike in commercial LPG rates.

The increase has pushed the price of a commercial LPG cylinder to Rs 3,152 from Rs 2,162 earlier this month and Rs 1,844 just a few months ago, triggering a concern among hotel owners.

PC Rao, president, Bruhat Bangalore Hotels Association, said the LPG price hike would hit small and medium hotel owners the hardest, as they operate on narrow profit margins and largely serve daily wage workers, auto drivers and middle-class customers. Unlike star hotels, which may have greater capacity to absorb rising operational costs, smaller eateries and roadside hotels have little room to manage such sudden increases. He said the steep rise in fuel costs has placed them under immense financial strain, making food price revision inevitable.

Rao said the hotel industry has built a reputation in Bengaluru for serving hygienic and affordable food. But maintaining that standard is becoming increasingly difficult with rising LPG and electricity costs. The burden would eventually be passed on to customers, as hotels cannot continue absorbing the losses, he warned. CONTINUED ON: P2

CM: Polls out of way, hikes in

CM Siddaramaiah said the hike was done now as the Assembly elections are over. "This is not governance - this is organised looting," he said. "What a cruel irony - on Labour Day, this is Modi's 'gift' to the working class: higher costs, shrinking incomes and more hardship" | P4

MM HILLS MISHAP

Over 20 pax hurt as KSRTC bus topples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

AT least 20 passengers sustained injuries after a KSRTC bus overturned near Ponnachi Cross, close to Talubetta in Male Mahadeshwara Hills on Friday afternoon.

The bus from the Mysuru depot was heading to Hanur, ferrying devotees who had visited the hill shrine for the special Buddha Purnima Puja when the accident occurred. The bus was reportedly carrying over 50 passengers at the time of the accident, and the injured persons were admitted to the Hanur Taluk Hospital.

The driver lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a sharp curve on the narrow ghat road between Male Mahadeshwara Hill and Talubetta, causing the bus to topple. It happened at the Ponnachi bend, a stretch known for its difficult terrain, sources said. Over 20 passengers sustained injuries, some of them serious injuries. P3

Expect relatively cooler days in May, higher night-time temp: Met office

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

THE Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday predicted comparatively cooler days and warmer nights in May in most parts of the country. However, some parts of India, including the foothills of the Himalayas, eastern coastal states, Gujarat and Maharashtra, could experience above normal heatwaves.

Daytime temperatures will be relatively cooler than normal, as most parts of the country are expected to experience above normal pre-monsoon showers. There is also a higher possibility of the development of El Nino, which could lead to subdued monsoon conditions, impacting agriculture.

According to IMD's analysis, maximum temperatures are likely to be normal to below normal across many parts of the country, except in regions of the Southern Peninsula, Northeast and Northwest, where above-normal maximum temperatures are expected.

Conversely, many other areas, except for certain parts of Northwest India and some regions in central and Southern Peninsular India, could experience above normal minimum night time temperatures.

Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of the IMD, explained that warmer nights are expected due to cloudy weather, which is associated with above normal rainfall predictions. "Above normal rainfall causes cloudy weather at night, which traps heat and makes the nights warmer," Mohapatra said.

Above-normal heatwave days are expected in some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, northern Uttar Pradesh, Northeast Bihar, coastal parts of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra, the IMD said.

Cyclonic circulation possible

IMD chief Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said climate change is contributing to the consistent rise in temperatures and noted the possibility of cyclonic circulation in the Southeast Bay of Bengal, which could enhance rainfall activity in May

EXPRESS READ

Kharge: Meeting soon to decide on leadership issue

Kalaburagi: The Congress top brass has not yet taken any decision on political issues of Karnataka, clarified AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge here on Friday. He said former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, LoP Rahul Gandhi and himself would hold a meeting to discuss the issues. He said the date of the meeting has not been decided yet | P4

Rahul, Nissanka fuel DC's seven-wicket win over RR

Jaipur: A wonderful exhibition of batting by KL Rahul (75) and Pathum Nissanka (62) overshadowed Riyan Parag's redemptive 90, powering Delhi Capitals to a seven-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in the IPL match on Friday. Parag's 50-ball blitz led Royals to a competitive 225 for six. But, Delhi Capitals reached 226 for three | P11

Khera gets bail in Himanta's wife row

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has granted Congress leader Pawan Khera anticipatory bail in connection with the FIR registered on the complaint by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, over his allegation that she held multiple passports and property abroad. Thursday's order of the SC was uploaded on its website on Friday | P7

PRIDE OF PLACE

Sikkim first paperless state judiciary in India

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

CHIEF Justice of India Justice Surya Kant on Friday declared Sikkim as the first paperless state judiciary in the country, while inaugurating a Conclave on Technology and Judicial Education in Gangtok.

Addressing the inaugural session of the two-day conclave, the CJI said the Indian legal landscape has moved away from the era of the paper trail, where vital records languished in physical storage, to a vibrant digital ecosystem. Digital reform, he said, is not a matter of theory, but a practical necessity for sustaining the rule of law.

"Beyond basic data collection, we have witnessed the advent of intelligent assistance within our chambers," he said, mentioning translation tool SUVAS and SUPACE, an AI-driven tool designed to assist judges.

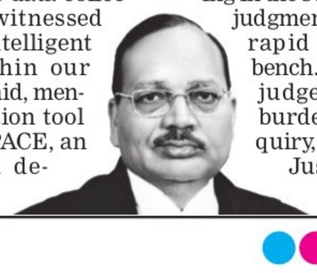
These innovations act as force multipliers, he said, aiding in the swift translation of judgments and providing rapid research to the bench. "They relieve the judge of mechanical burden of routine inquiry," the CJI said.

Justice Surya Kant also spoke about the role of Artificial Intelligence in improving efficiency in trial courts, including in managing cases, verifying assets and ensuring consistency in sentencing. He urged judicial academies to go beyond basic digital training and also teach judges and legal professionals about the ethical use of newer technologies.

Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court Justice A Muhammed Mustaque, Sri Lankan SC judge Mohammad Dhilip Nawaz and Seychelles Supreme Court CJ Rony James Govinden were present, among others.

AI can be used to identify patterns for judges

CJI Surya Kant said AI systems can be deployed to identify patterns in sentencing and bail practices, to promote greater consistency and predictability. "The modern judge must also engage with the logic that underpins emerging technologies," the CJI said



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU

ALMANAC TODAY
Saturday: 02.05.2026 • Year: Parabhava • Ayana: Uttharayana
Ritu: Vasantha • Masa: Vaishaka • Paksha: Krishna • Tithi: Prathami 10.43 pm
Nakshatra: Vishaka 5.20 am • Moon in Vrischika Rashi • Rahukaala: 09:00 am to 10:30am
Gulikakala: 06:00 am to 07:30 am • Yamaganda: 01:49 pm to 03:26 pm

WEATHER
MIN 20°C | MAX 34°C
FORECAST
Scattered clouds

Sunrise 05.58 am
Sunset 06.34 pm
Moonrise 07.11 pm
Moonset 06.03 am

Nanna E-Khata Andolana to address grievances

Drive starts May 16, to be held at 50 centres in city every Saturday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

DEPUTY Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday announced that the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Revenue Department will start 'Nanna E-Khata Andolana' at 50 centres across five city corporations under it on every Saturday, beginning from May 16, to redress issues related to e-khata.

He told the media that in 10 months, 200 officials with the combined 50,000 mandays created 23 lakh e-khatas. Now, the option will be given for property owners.

"Our government's sixth guarantee is the land guarantee and the e-khata movement has been launched to avoid litigation and to save their property. We scanned all the documents and made sure that property documents were available on mobile phones. We have allowed 10 lakh people to download documents. We are working on sending documents to the doorsteps of land owners for free through 'Nanna E-Khata Andolana'," he said.

The GBA revenue team told the DCM that 100 citizens will be invited in advance at each centre. As their applications are pre-screened, the officials will be fully prepared to resolve the issue on the spot.

Through this, 5,000 citizens will get instant redressal on the spot every week. This scheme will create an integrated, comprehensive platform for direct interaction between citizens and GBA and corporations, ensuring transparency, accountability and time-bound service delivery. With 100 cases being resolved at each centre, around 5,000 complaints will be resolved across the city on every Saturday.

Shivakumar said 7,000 applications across five city corporation were received for converting 'B' khata to 'A' e-khata, and after verification, all these applications have been disposed of. "The owners had to pay betterment charges, and this amount is around Rs 300 crore," he added.

He said that every new application will be disposed of within 15 days. Owners with a 'B' khata property can avail of this historic opportunity to get 'A' khatas, he added.

On the concerns of apartment owners seeking e-khata, he said GBA has disposed of 100% of cases. He said that to help owners under GBA limits feel secure about their property, other citizen-friendly features of the e-Khata system will be introduced, like 'automatic mutation' where the e-Khata is automatically changed in the name of the buyer based on the registrations at any Sub-Registrar's office; allowing citizens to edit the remaining details in their final e-khata, except the name and area of the property online; automatic approval after five working days; and automatic updating of BESCOM and property tax records.

RAIN HAVOC AFTERMATH

REMOVE DANGEROUS STRUCTURES, TREES, DCM TELLS GBA OFFICIALS

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the traffic department has identified 448 trees in the city that can cause loss to life or property and has instructed the city corporations to remove them

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN the backdrop of the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital wall collapse on Wednesday that left seven persons dead, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar said he has asked the corporation officials to identify old and dangerous buildings and compound walls that may impact the common man.

He said the Traffic Department has identified 448 trees that can cause loss to life or property and has given instructions to Bengaluru City Police and the Corporations to go ahead and remove such trees, which are necessary for the free flow of vehicular traffic.

The workers under the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike had started identifying and removing unauthorised and unsafe buildings after nine workers were killed following a building collapse at Babusab Palya on October 22, 2024. However, the operation was halted later.

Similarly, a dilapidated 70-year-old three-storey building collapsed in Subbaraju Layout in Lakkasandra in Adugodi in 2021. Accordingly, over 500 such weak and dangerous buildings were identified.

Experts had said the Corporation must serve notice and give 15 days' time to owners and inhabitants to vacate and raze the building on their own, failing which the civic body itself will raze the structure. But these actions have only remained knee-jerk reactions.

Bowring Wall Collapse: Shivajinagar EE, AEE placed under suspension Executive Engineer Mohammed Javed and Assistant Executive Engineer Rudramuni have been placed under suspension. Also, a show cause notice is issued to dean of the Bowring Hospital. As per a top official from BCCC, the action is being questioned as the Corporation is no where concerned since the property belongs to the medical college.

"The Health and Family Welfare Additional Chief Secretary said he will issue notice, but the CM was insisting on direct action. However at first step, only notice is issued. There will be probe on the role of maintenance engineer of the institute. To send a message to public that action has been taken following the incident, two GBA engineers have been suspended," said the official, adding that if the government failed to lift the suspension, the officials will be encouraged to approach court as they are nowhere connected to the incident.

TREEFALL

376 Trees

981 Branches

FEEE[illegible] FROM APRIL 29 TO MAY 1

B'luru Central City Corpn	121, 204
East City Corpn	6,8
West City Corpn	152, 481
South City Corpn	62,186
North City Corpn	35,102

DCM unveils five projects, talks of double decker flyover

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

"WE have thought about building a double decker flyover running about 44km in the city. If we had thought about this earlier, we could have done a double decker project for about 200km along the 336km Metro project. However, it is not too late now," Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Friday.

The DCM took to the city's roads to either inaugurate or lay the foundation stone for five development works. He began by flagging off the trial operation of the rail-cum-road flyover between RV Road and Central Silk Board near HSR Layout ramp entrance. The 5.12km signal-free corridor cost Rs 499crore. He then proceeded to lay the foundation stone for the construction of a skywalk at Banashankari Junction, which is expected to improve both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. According to Shivakumar, the skywalk has been taken into consideration after Leader of Opposition R Ashoka and MP Tejaswi Surya proposed it.

The inauguration of a commercial complex and multi-storey car park at Gandhi Bazaar was next. The six-storey commercial complex with space for 51 shops, was constructed at a cost of Rs 22crore. Following this, a car park complex on the ground floor of KR Market building was inaugurated. The complex sprawls across 10,000sqm, and can accommodate 200 cars and 400 two-wheelers. "Police should ensure vehicles are not parked by the roadside for a distance of 1km from here, as it is leading to traffic congestion. People should use the building that was built at a huge cost for the people. We are making new rules to encourage private companies in terms of vehicle parking," Shivakumar said.The last stop was MG Road Metro Station. The station's pillars have been set up with dynamic lighting in a bid to beautify them, which cost Rs 3.08crore.

Flyover at Banashankari junction

On Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy's suggestion to build a flyover along with a skywalk at Banashankari junction to ease traffic, DCM DK Shivakumar has written to BMRCL and Chief Commissioner of Greater Bengaluru Authority to explore the options. An official said a Rs 50-crore swanky skywalk is proposed at the junction. Taking the project further, a 1.5km flyover has been suggested, covering the stretch from JSS Circle, Yediyur Maternity Hospital and Deepak Nursing Home up to Banashankari temple.

Left with no choice, say hotel owners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE association urged the central government to reduce GST on commercial LPG from 18% to 5%, similar to domestic LPG, and rationalise prices to provide relief to the sector. Rao said hotels are also exploring alternatives to LPG, like PNG, firewood and biogas to reduce dependence.

Chandrashekhar Hebbar, honorary president, Karnataka State Hotel Association, said the LPG price increase has left hotels with little choice but to revise their prices. He, however, stressed that the burden cannot be entirely passed onto customers, especially when many depend on hotels for affordable meals every day. Staple food items like idly, vada, dosa, rice and sambar, widely consumed by the common people, should not see steep price hikes. Hotels are now assessing which menu item prices can be revised while ensuring essential food remains affordable, he added.

Another hotelier said many establishments are stocking up on firewood and using it as an alternative to cope with the rising LPG costs.

PEENYA ELEVATED FLYOVER TO BE SHUT FOR 3 DAYS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

TRAFFIC on the Peenya elevated flyover (Dr Sri Shivakumar Swamiji flyover) on National Highway-4 will be closed for three days -- from 5am May 5 to 11am May 8 -- to facilitate final load testing. Movement of all types of vehicles will be prohibited on the stretch between Kennametal Widia upper ramp and SRS down ramp, as well as from CMTI Junction to Parle-G Toll via the flyover. The restriction follows the completion of cable repair works on the flyover under Peenya traffic police station limits.

POLICE HAVE MARKED OUT ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

Nelamangala towards Bengaluru: Take a diversion near Kennametal Factory and proceed via NH-4 (below the flyover) and service road through 8th Mile, Dasarahalli, Jalahalli Cross, Peenya Police Station Junction, SRS Junction and Goraguntepalya

CMTI towards Nelamangala: Use NH-4 (below flyover) and service road via SRS Junction, Peenya Police Station Junction, Jalahalli Cross, Dasarahalli, 8th Mile and Parle-G Toll

GBA's pick to draft city master plan awaits govt nod

AKNISREE KARTHIK @ Bengaluru

THE Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has finalised an agency through global tenders to draft the first-ever master plan for the city with a 20-year horizon and is likely to have the target set for 2047, officials in the civic body's town planning department said.

The officials said the last approved master plan – RMP 2015 – was drafted in 2005, and the new one will be prepared for 2047 for 686.82 square kilometres of the city, driven by data including the latest developments and the plan laid for the evolving needs of the city.

A senior official of the department told TNIE, "Three bidders took part in the tender process for drafting the master plan based on Geographic Information System (GIS) for Bengaluru, of which two were chosen for the financial bidding. The final bidder has been selected by the GBA and sent to the state government for approval.

"All previous master plans for the city were prepared by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA). This is the first time the GBA is drafting the city plan. Earlier, the combined area of Bengaluru – those under the GBA and those under the BDA – was 1,207 square kilometres. With the BDA drafting the master plan for the areas under it, GBA's master plan would cover 686.82 square kilometres," the official said.

While the BDA is drafting Revised Master Plan 2041, the GBA is aiming for 2047. The official said both master plans will be in sync, as geographically there is a boundary but both are aimed at a larger Bengaluru. "Generally, the master plans are prepared for 20 years, and the new one is aimed at 2047. A final decision on the year would be taken at a later stage," the official said.

MLC and president of FIBA Asia and KOA Dr K Govindaraj (centre) with Vimanapura Boys, the winners of BS Narayan Memorial Trophy in the State Sub-Junior Basketball Championship for Boys and Girls, at Sri Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Friday

Horoscopes By Holiday

HOLIDAY MATHIS

02nd May : The Language of Flowers Blossoms are organic communication. The color, shape, timing and scent of each one is a message to the world: come closer, stay away, take this, carry that. Entire relationships formed around this exchange. Mercury's change to Gemini casts new light on your own systems of communication. What are you signaling without words, and who is responding to the invitation?

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
You can't possibly know the outcome for every action. But if you do what's likely to lead to good health, you have the best shot at feeling able, successful, confident and energetic later, thus giving future you more options.

TAURUS (Apr. 20 - May 20)
You feel the vibes and respond -- you laugh, cry, advance or retreat. Your sensitivity also makes you more creative. The imaginative processes that mystify many will come very easily to you.

GEMINI (May 21 - June 21)
Neat results are born of messy processes. Being willing to get a little grubby with the work will be the key to your overall success. And remember, it doesn't have to be perfect (or even good) to be finished. Finished is the goal.

CANCER (June 22 - July 22)
The good ideas abound. The sustainable ideas are a bit harder to come by. Be discerning. Take ideas through a bit of rigor to test them out. You deserve a solution that will pay you back in a lasting way.

LEO (July 23 - Aug. 22)
When you hear sad stories, instead of feeling pity, you'll see the strength in others. That's worth mentioning and reflecting. You'll offer concrete assistance in the form of information, resources and tools to actually improve things.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)
The same efforts aren't yielding the desired result. It's time to change the strategy. Try one small experiment. You cut an hour of effort and spend it thinking instead. New information isn't attacking you. It's collaborating with you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 - Oct. 23)
Your full attention has power. People find it addicting. A few uninterrupted minutes with you will make a lasting impression. Your focus tells people they matter more to you than whatever's happening on your phone.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 21)
People irritate you -- or rather, what you think about people can be quite irritating. Today, you will steer that noise differently or possibly drown it out by focusing exclusively on what you want instead of what's getting in the way.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)
As you investigate an unfolding mystery, you're somewhat unattached to being right. This is the way to do it. It makes it OK to change your mind. Your ideas are allowed to evolve, and they will. They'll evolve toward truth instead of bias.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)
You see patterns across situations. What happened before, what's happening now, what might happen next. You connect dots that aren't sitting right next to each other because you see more pictures -- more possibilities, more things that might be.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)
There is no generic version of this story that will satisfy across the board. While everyone loves a happy ending, that looks different for each person. Work toward your own very specific good result until you have it.

PISCES (Feb. 19 - Mar 20)
People are more fragile than they look today. Those who express their emotions, who act on their compassion and who have strong drives to empathize and protect are so necessary to the health of the whole group.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

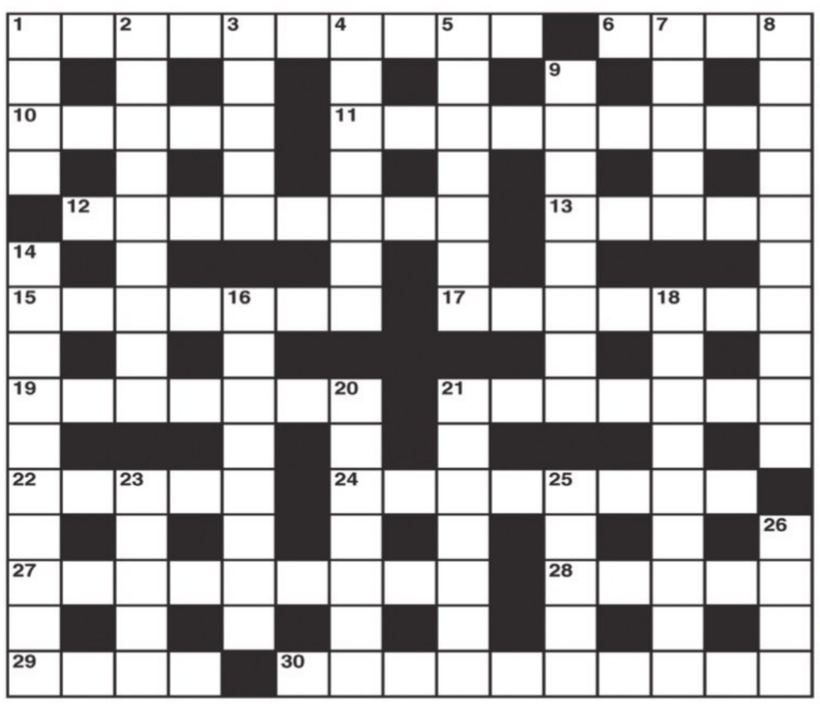
	7	6		3				
9	1		4					
					6	7		
6	5			7				
		8		4		2		
				5			1	8
		9	3					
					5		2	3
				2		5	6	

8	1	9	7	3	6	4	2	5
2	6	5	8	4	9	3	1	7
3	4	7	2	1	5	6	9	8
5	2	6	4	8	3	9	7	1
1	9	3	6	5	7	8	4	2
7	8	4	9	2	1	5	3	6
4	3	8	5	7	2	1	6	9
9	5	2	1	6	4	7	8	3
6	7	1	3	9	8	2	5	4

SUDOKU EVIL

TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



CROSS WORD

ACROSS
1 Socialist soccer player (4-6)
6 The favourite is making no effort we hear (4)
10 Do a rough job of cleaning (5)
11 Touching on a union with indifferent result (9)
12 Spring a lock outside and make illegal entry (8)
13 After a drink half the band provide dance music (5)
15 Heroine died of lost hope and returning trouble (7)
17 Showed no respect and ate greedily (7)
19 We yearn for change in early January (3,4)
21 Unusual glee shown after getting a pass in school (7)
22 Dark disturbing thing (5)
24 Neat and honest (8)
27 Not bubbly but nevertheless a grape product (5,4)
28 Transport from the East is not in time (5)
29 One doesn't have to have it (4)
30 Payment for one episode of a serial (10)

DOWN
1 Getting drunk? That's rich! (4)
2 Down-to-earth entertainment? (5,4)
3 Factory labours (5)
4 Falls for a redhead once more and uplifted (7)
5 How time flies! (7)
7 Churned up mud at the starting line (5)
8 Their union offers security (4,3,3)
9 Burn a fuel that draws well (8)
14 It's bright and early (7,3)
16 Speak falsely yet be quiet! (3,5)
18 Newcomer with a healthy complexion (5,4)
20 Used by communicators in a USSR translation (7)
21 Running dog on hire (7)
23 A leading publication? (5)
25 One hand is just perfect (5)
26 Cried quietly in the rain (4)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1 Lyrical, 5 Light, 8 Ascertain, 9 Via, 10 Heap, 12 Denounce, 14 Rotten, 15 Relief, 17 Pretoria, 18 Weed, 21 Pas, 22 Gladstone, 24 Reset, 25 Dailies.

Down: 1 Loath, 2 Roc, 3 Cure, 4 Leader, 5 Londoner, 6 Given time, 7 Tea leaf, 11 Actresses, 13 Besought, 14 Repaper, 16 Riband, 19 Deeds, 20 Asti, 23 Obi.

JUMBLE

UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

AERCZ

TRIOB

RCAEAM

BZOAEG

BUT I GOT SO TROUBLED
You have a good eye! That there will evaporate a planet in a millisecond.
What in the world is this?
3/7
WHEN ALIENS SET UP AN OPEN-AIR MARKET ON EARTH, IT TURNED OUT TO BE A ---
Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: COMIC FAULT PELVIS VASTLY
Answer: His gambling addiction was becoming a serious problem — "SU-VICE" IT TO SAY

With the goal of encouraging amicable dispute resolution, the Supreme Court has launched a nationwide campaign 'Samadhan Samaroha-2026'. The initiative, which began on April 21, will conclude with a Special Lok Adalat scheduled for August 21, 22 and 23. The SC has identified 4,328 cases from Karnataka that are suitable for settlement through conciliation

TV actor held for blackmailing women

Accused befriended single women on social media, lured them with promises and developed intimate relationships

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A Kannada television actor and member of Bengaluru South District Child Welfare Committee was arrested by Rajarajeshwari Nagar police for allegedly blackmailing women after engaging in sexual relationships and recording videos of private moments.

The accused was identified as Haniyuru Chandregowda.

Police said a 43-year-old makeup artist filed a complaint against him on Thursday, stating that she came into contact with him in 2021, when he promised to help her get work in the film industry. He started visiting her house frequently and developed a physical relationship with her. He allegedly extorted around Rs 5 lakh from her by threatening to release private videos and photos.

During investigation, over 20 photos and videos of different women were found on his mobile phone.

Police added that Chandregowda used to befriend single women through social media platforms. He would chat with them and make video calls, and later lure them with various promises. He would have intimate relationships with them, take money and jewellery, and cheat them. He allegedly introduced himself to women in different roles, including as a senior police officer.

Police said the accused would be produced before court and taken into custody for further interrogation. His mobile phone was seized and will be sent for forensic examination. As several photos of different women have been found, victims who were cheated by the accused have been urged to come forward and file complaints.

Police assured the complainants that their identities would be kept confidential and a detailed investigation will be conducted.

Space tech centre opens in B'luru, to focus on research & innovation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge inspects equipment at the Centre of Excellence for Space Technology on Friday | EXPRESS

INDIA'S first state-led Centre of Excellence for Space Technology was launched in Bengaluru on Friday, marking a major step in the country's space economy and positioning Karnataka as a national space innovation hub. The centre, established by the Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society in collaboration with SIA-India, aims to bridge the gap between research and commercialisation of space technologies.

The centre was inaugurated by IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge in the presence of government officials, scientists and industry leaders. Speaking at the launch, Kharge said Karnataka has consistently led India's technology and innovation sectors and the new centre would extend that leadership into this strategic sector.

The centre will focus on advanced research and innovation in space technologies, industry-aligned training, talent development, startup incubation and expanding the application of space technologies across sectors such as agriculture, climate, disaster management, connectivity, life sciences and national security.

During the launch, the state government expressed interest in the development of satellites for societal and end-user needs under the theme 'Space Tech for Societal Impact'. Officials highlighted the need for a common technical facility to support the growing space ecosystem and said consultations will be held with industry stakeholders.

The centre formalised strategic MoUs with Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Helogen Corporation, Association of Biotechnology led Enterprises and Dassault Systemes to strengthen research, space biotechnology, startup incubation and workforce development.

Officials said the Centre would play a key role in supporting innovation, startups and creating new opportunities in India's fast-growing space economy.

NET SPREAD WIDE

Cops intensify search for jewellery shop burglars

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

BAGALAGUNTE police have intensified their search for a gang that broke into a jewellery shop on Hesaraghatta Main Road after drilling a hole in its rear wall and escaping with 70 kg of silver articles worth around Rs 1.2 crore on the night of April 27.

The gang also broke into a hardware dealer's godown nearby and took away laptops, a mobile phone, sanitary items worth around Rs 50,000, and Rs 1,500 in cash the same night.

According to an FIR, Mahendra Kumar J, 50, a resident of KN Extension in Yeshwanthpur, shut his jewellery shop around 9.15 pm after keeping gold ornaments in a locker and leaving silver items in the showcase. Next morning around 7.30 am, the building owner called Kumar and informed him that the rear wall of his shop had been broken.

Kumar, who rushed to the shop immediately, found the front door lock intact. The gang members first entered a godown behind the jewellery shop after breaking its lock. Later, they drilled a hole in the rear wall and entered the jewellery shop.

The investigating team is examining the CCTV footage obtained from near the jewellery shop.

Police crack jewellery theft case, arrest two, recover gold worth Rs 16L in Belagavi

Belagavi: The police have cracked a jewellery theft case by arresting two accused during an operation in Belagavi on Thursday. Stolen gold ornaments weighing 110.49 gram and valued at Rs 16.57 lakh were recovered. The arrested have been identified as Ujjwala Ravi Kammar (40) and Shiva Shankar Appayannavar (30). Among the seized items were gold bars weighing 49.97 grams worth Rs 7,49,550, a 10-gram gold ring valued at Rs 1.5 lakh, a gold chain weighing 10.30 grams worth Rs 1,54,500, another necklace weighing 29.12 grams valued at Rs 4,36,800, along with other ornaments. The total seizure amounted to Rs 16,57,367. **ENS**

LABOUR RIGHTS

A woman carrying her child takes part in a rally organised by various trade unions to mark the International Labour Day on Friday. Participants used the occasion to highlight ongoing struggles in today's workplaces | KEVIN NASHON

EXPRESS READ

Teen run over by bus while crossing road

Bengaluru: A 16-year-old boy, who had stepped out to buy water for his sick father, died after coming under the wheels of a speeding bus while crossing the Hennur-Bagalur Main Road near Geddalahalli on Friday morning. The deceased has been identified as Varun, a Class 10 student at a private school and a resident of Geddalahalli. The police said the incident occurred around 11.30 am when Varun stepped out of his house to buy water. While he was crossing the road, a speeding private bus coming from the Hennur side hit him and ran over his chest, resulting in his death on the spot. A case has been registered at the Hennur traffic police station based on a complaint by his father. The bus driver, Imran Khan (38), has been arrested, and the vehicle has been seized, the police said. **ENS**

Passengers come out of the bus after it toppled near MM Hills on Friday

Accident hits traffic to shrine for several hours

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE injured were rushed to government hospitals in Hanur and Kollegal. Emergency response teams, including local police from MM Hills, rushed to the spot and initiated rescue operations. As the bus fell on the road, there was a major disruption of traffic heading to the hill shrine. Hundreds of vehicles carrying devotees were stranded for several hours, forming a long traffic jam on the route. Authorities deployed a crane to remove the bus. The police have begun an investigation into the exact cause of the accident.

Nursing student from Kerala ends life in hostel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A 19-year-old second-year BSc nursing student from Kerala ended his life in his hostel room near Electronics City in Hebbagodi police limits on Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as Adhityan PA. His parents have alleged that their son died by suicide because of the alleged harassment by the nursing college staff.

According to police, Adhityan's roommates found him hanging from a ceiling fan around 12.30 pm. Adhityan's father suspects some foul play in his son's death. In his complaint, he stated that about 20 days ago, his son informed him that his roommates were caught by some hostel staff for alleged drug abuse. Though Adhityan was not involved, he and his roommates were warned. This could be the reason for his extreme step, he said. A case of unnatural death has been registered.

HELPLINE: If you are having suicidal thoughts, or are worried about a friend or need emotional support, call Sneha Foundation - 04424640050, Tele Manas - 14416 (available 24x7) or Tata Institute of Social Sciences' helpline - 02225521111 from Monday to Saturday between 8 am and 10 pm.

ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
APCRDA Project Office, Amaravati, Rayapudi Post, Thulluru Mandal, Guntur District - 522237, Andhra Pradesh.
NIT No. MAU61-PLG0OTH/111/2026-PLG Dt : 01/05/2026
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
NAME OF THE WORK: APCRDA-Request for Proposal (RfP) for "Selection of Strategic Support Agency (SSA) for Preparation of the Amaravati Economic Region Plan (AERP)".
The bid may be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from a day after approval of NIT with 40 days schedule **(02-05-2026 to 11-06-2026)**. For further details please refer to **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** and **www.crda.ap.gov.in.**
Sd/- COMMISSIONER, APCRDA, AMARAVATI

WESTERN RAILWAY
Material Management Department
VARIOUS MATERIALS SUPPLY
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No. S/21/2026 Date 28.04.2026

S.N.	Tender No	Short Description of items	Quantity	T.O.D.
132	07265700	Running contract for one year:-PVC insulated armoured, unscreened, underground railway signalling cable of size 12 coreX1.5 Sq.mm conforming to RDSO SPECN No. IRS:S-63/2014 (REV 4.0)	6000 KM	28-May-26
133	22263113	Set of Suspension Tube Bearing (Driving and Non Driving)	193 Set	27-May-26
134	22262803	Reverser J1 & J2, Capacity 1500 Amps	27 Nos	25-May-26
135	11255051	Supply, Installation and commissioning of EOT CRANE 15/5 TON as per attached specification	1 Nos	25-May-26
136	11245057	Supply, Erection & Commissioning of 25/10 Ton EOT Crane	1 Nos	25-May-26
137	04261706A	Liquefied Petroleum Gas	59785 KG	23-May-26

CORRIGENDUM
Please read the due date as **"11.05.2026"** for the **Tender Notice No: S-13-2026 Dated: 11.03.2026 at Sr. No. 87**
Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website **www.ireps.gov.in and wr.indianrailways.gov.in.** 0051
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PUBLIC NOTICE
It is hereby notified to the general public that my clients 1) Mrs. Umera Kousar, W/o Mohammed Tajamul Pasha, and 2) Mr. Mohamed Tajamul Pasha, S/o Late Ahmed Jan, both are R/o No.45, TKS Residency, Shampur Main Road, Arabic College, Bangalore North, Bengaluru – 560045, have intended to purchase the property mentioned in the schedule below, which is presently owned by Mrs. C Savithramma W/o Veerabhadrappa, R/o No.585, 1st Main Road, M M Layout, Kavalbyrasandra, Bangalore North, Bangalore-560032. The schedule property was purchased by her husband Mr. Veerabhadrappa under a registered Sale Deed Dated 20.03.1985, vide Document No.4983/1984-85, of Book-I, Volume No.3846, at pages 115-120, registered on 29.03.1985 in the office of the Sub-Registrar Bangalore North Taluk, Bangalore. Subsequently, Mr.Veerabadrappa died intestate on 06.05.2006, after his demise Khata of the schedule property has been transferred in the name Mrs. C Savithramma and others.
If any person/s having any objection for the proposed purchase or having any right, title, claim and interest over the schedule property may approach their counsel with supporting documents within Seven (7) days from the date of this publication. If there were to be no response to this publication within the time stipulated, my clients will proceed with the purchase of the schedule property. Any response after the expiry of the stipulated time will be ignored.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of the property bearing BBMP New Municipal No.28/27, e-PID No.5997438254, (formerly Khata No.1136/585), situated at 4th Cross M M Layout, Kavalbyrasandra, Bangalore, comes under the jurisdiction of BBMP New Ward No.32, measuring East to West: 40 Feet and North to South: 30 Feet, totally measuring 1200 Sq. ft, along building constructed thereon and bounded on: East by: House List No.590, West by: Road, North by: House List No.584, and South by: House List No.586.
Azeemuddin M Mothekhan,
Advocate for
Oasis Legal Solutions
No.30, 2nd Floor, CBI Main Road, Ganganagar, Bangalore-560032.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Lost original property Documents
General public are informed that my client Srikantjois Nagappa residing at No. 468, 55th Cross, 3rd Block, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560 010 has lost 1) **Original allotment letter 2) possession certificate bearing PA No. 86- 61-62 dated 13-101961 3) The lease agreement doc. No. 955 dated 5-7- 1954.** He has also lodged the required complaint in the jurisdictional police online acknowledged under **Lost Report No. 2180564/2026 dated 30-4-2026, by the Karnataka State Police u/s 155 Cr.PC.** If any person/s, firm, company, institution or organization got any claim/information regarding the lost documents or found the said lost documents may please kindly inform the undersigned within 15 days from the date of this publication, failing which it shall be presumed that no such claims exist.
B.R. Venkatachalapathy,
Advocate, Enrl. No. KAR/124/76
No. 2, 1st Floor, 2nd Cross,
J.M. Lane, Balepet,
Bangalore-560 053.
Mob. 93411 95589
Date: 1-5-2026

OBITUARY

Born : 19.07.1955
Died : 01.05.2026
Mrs. ASHA VIJAYARAGHAVAN
RETD. JUDICIAL MEMBER, ITAT,
W/o Mr. R.VIJAYARAGHAVAN
D/o Mr.K.R.RAMAMANI - Mrs. HEMALATA RAMAMANI
DEEPLY MOURNED BY
R. Vijayaraghavan, Mridula, Vikram, and Family Members
Staff and Advocates - SAPR Advocates
Staff RMT SCHOOL
Last Rites on 3rd May 2026 (Sunday) at 9.00 AM
New No:75A, Old No:105A, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Mylapore, Chennai - 4.
Mobile : 98402 96186

THE SPECIAL OFFICER AND COMPETENT AUTHORITY,
(UNDER KPIDFE - IMA & OTHER SCAM)
3rd Floor, Podium Block, V.V Tower, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-560001
NOTICE/INVITATION FOR E-AUCTION FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
Pursuant to attachment of Immovable properties by the Government under the provisions of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishments Act, 2004 (KPIDFE Act) and pursuant to the absolute attachment order by the Hon'ble Special Court, the Special Officer & Competent Authority is issuing notice for e-auction of the immovable property through e-auction on 'as is where is and whatever there is basis'. The intending bidders will be required to furnish Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (as mentioned against each auction in the e-portal provided by the Service Provider/Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only).
Short description of the Immovable Property (SPLOCA/AUC(2)/CR/06/2025-26)
Properties are free of all encumbrances and are in the name of Competent Authority appointed by Government and confirmed by the Special Court under KPIDFE Act, 2004 and Hon'ble High Court Of Karnataka has cleared the title (Khata stands in the name of Competent Authority and Auctioning Authority)

Sl. No.	DETAILS OF THE SCHEDULE PROPERTY (Clear Title by Court in order No. MISC No. 692/2019)	Minimum Bid Price (Rs)	EMD (Rs)	Bid Increase Value (Rs)
	No. 2/3, New PID No.078-W0202—8 (Old PID No.91-76-2/3) , Spencer Road, Frazer Town, Bangalore-05, measuring East to West 52.6 ft and North to South 38 ft aggregating 1998.8 Sq.ft. Location: https://maps.app.goo.gl/MPsttJnuANmSDoKo8, Latitude and **Longitude: 12°59'50.0"N 77°36'29.9"E**			
(a)	Ground Floor, Flat No.GF-01, UDS-399.67, SBA- 1602 Sq.ft	1,45,35,000/-	14,54,000/-	1,46,000/-
(b)	1st Floor, Flat No. FF-01, UDS-399.76, SBA-1602.50 Sq.ft	1,47,06,000/-	14,71,000/-	1,48,000/-
(c)	2nd Floor, Flat No. SF-01, UDS-399.76 , SBA-1602.50 Sq.ft	1,48,77,000/-	14,88,000/-	1,49,000/-
(d)	3rd Floor, Flat No.TF-01, UDS-399.76 , SBA-1602.50 Sq.ft	1,46,20,500/-	14,63,000/-	1,47,000/-
(e)	4th Floor, Flat No.FRF-01, UDS-399.76 , SBA-1602.50 Sq.ft	1,46,20,500/-	14,63,000/-	1,47,000/-

Date of Pre-bid meeting & time and Place	Date of Inspection & time	Last Date of Submission of Bids & EMD submission	Date & Time of E Auction
14th May 2026, 3 pm to 4 pm Place: O/o SPLOCA, 3rd Floor, Podium Block, Visveswariah Tower, Bengaluru-01	16th May 2026 11:00am to 01:00pm	26th May 2026 Before 5pm	29th May 2026 11 am to 1 pm

For Registration & Online Auction, you can login to: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** (Helpdesk No: 080-46010000, 080-68948777) The interested bidders who require auction related information can contact Assistant Commissioner, Office of the Special Officer & Competent Authority, 3rd Floor, Podium Block, Visveswariah Towers, Dr.Ambedkar Veedi, Bengaluru-560001, e-mail ID: **splocaeauction@gmail.com** or Contact Mob. No 9945515174.
Date: 30-04-2026
Place: Bengaluru
DIPR/CP/435/Zen/2026-27
Sd/-
Special Officer & Competent Authority
(IMA & Other Scam), Bengaluru.

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Union Minister of State for Labour Shobha Karandlaje on Friday said efforts have been made to amend 29 labour laws and implement them under four labour codes. Among these, the Social Security Code will be implemented to provide social security, pension and ESI facilities to all workers in the country, she said

MAY DAY MAYHEM

CENTRE WAITED FOR COMPLETION OF POLLS TO HIKE LPG PRICE: CM

Siddu says this is Modi model -- mislead people during elections, burden them later

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

SLAMMING the Union government for hiking the price of commercial LPG cylinders, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said this was done now after deliberately holding back such increases during the Assembly election period so as not to turn off voters.

He noted that in just a four-month period, commercial LPG cylinder price was increased six times, pushing the total burden on consumers up by Rs 1,518. "This is not governance - this is organised looting," he said.

Taking to X, Siddaramaiah said as the Congress had warned earlier, as soon as the Assembly elections got over, the Centre started hiking prices again. "The price of commercial LPG cylinders was increased by Rs 993 on May 1, taking the cost to Rs 3,071.50 per cylinder," he said.

The CM also pointed out that every time global conditions change, instead of protecting citizens, Prime Minister Narendra Modi simply passes the burden on to them. "His much-publicised but hollow foreign policy has failed to shield our economy, and now ordinary Indians are paying the price for it. This hike will not just affect businesses, it will hit every household. Hotels, restaurants, small eateries and catering services will be forced to increase prices, making everyday food more expensive," he said. The urban working class, daily wage earners and small business owners will suffer the most. From a cup of tea to a simple meal, everything will become costlier, he added.

"What a cruel irony - on Labour Day, this is Modi's 'gift' to the working class: higher costs, shrinking incomes and more hardship. While workers ask for dignity and relief, this government gives them inflation and excuses. This is only the beginning; more such increases will follow and the burden will keep shifting to citizens. This is the Modi model - mislead people during elections, and burden them after," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar too flayed the Central government, saying it betrayed the poor through the price hike. "The Centre was waiting for the five state elections to conclude before taking this decision. It had pushed people earlier to use firewood. They had gained publicity through the Ujjwala scheme, promising to reduce dependency on firewood stoves. Now, with an increase, how are people expected to survive? For this reason, we implemented the five guarantee schemes. In our state, around 1.5 crore families are benefiting from these schemes," he added.

He said they will fight against the price hike. "None of the state BJP leaders are speaking on this now," he said.

CM change not yet? Cong could get busy with Kerala

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru:

THE Congress high command is likely to remain cautious with regard to a change in leadership in Karnataka, keeping in mind the 2028 assembly polls, winning which will mean first overcoming anti-incumbency.

The party leadership is unlikely to accede to pressure from either of the camps headed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and DCM DK Shivakumar, and is likely to work out a formula based on caste combination and winnability, according to sources.

The top brass, including Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi and LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, will weigh the options, including that of maintaining status quo by keeping Siddaramaiah as the AHINDA face of the party and DK Shivakumar as KPCC president, besides sending AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge as consensus CM candidate, sources added.

The outcome of the May 4 results of five state assemblies will also have a bearing on the decision. The party high command is likely to get busy if it wins Keralam, where it appears to have an edge, and forms the UDF government. "They have to resolve the issue of the Keralam chief minister if UDF gets a majority, so dealing with Karnataka's leadership issue will not be a priority," a Congress leader remarked.

The Siddaramaiah camp had been trying to pitch Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara as the future CM under the Dalit quota. A couple of days ago, the latter had welcomed the idea of Kharge becoming the CM, saying party leaders would accept him, given his seniority. Kharge had also clarified that the high command has not taken any decision on the Karnataka issue.

"He (Kharge) has said that for now, there is a chief minister, and the question of changing him does not arise at the moment. In our party, the AICC president is the supreme authority, along with Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and others. When word comes from the high command, we not only give respect but also accept the order," Parameshwara told reporters on Friday, adding, "When he (Kharge) says there is no change, it is a full stop (for change in leadership)." He said that since the statement came from Kharge, it is assumed that the top brass must have held deliberations over the issue.

"The decision of Kharge, Sonia and Rahul is like 'prasada' (sacred offering) to us which we accept," said DCM DK Shivakumar, reiterating his unwavering loyalty to the Congress leadership. "As a Congressman, I have been very loyal to the party. Our party leaders' words are very important. We will go by the party's directions," he told reporters.

CM Siddaramaiah and DCM DK Shivakumar at a Labour Day event in Bengaluru on Friday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

DCM's aide resets CM's wristwatch

Bengaluru: At a time when the Congress leaders, including the top brass have been mulling over change in leadership in Karnataka, the wristwatch worn by CM Siddaramaiah was found to be not showing the correct time. It happened at the May Day observation held at KPCC office here on Friday. DCM DK Shivakumar's close confidant and RS member GC Chandrashekhar, took the watch from the CM, checked the time, reset it, and gave it to him. Siddaramaiah wore the watch again. He was supposed to arrive at 11 am to the event but both him and the DCM arrived at 1 pm. Wrist watches and Siddaramaiah have an inseparable relationship as he was castigated by the opposition parties for allegedly accepting a Hublot as a gift from a businessman during his first tenure as CM in 2016. ENS

Has AHINDA push halted Cong power tussle for now?

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @ Belagavi

A STRATEGIC intervention by several AHINDA leaders headed by Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi seems to have put the brakes on the simmering power tussle in the state Congress for now.

According to party sources, along with Housing Minister HC Mahadevappa, Jarkiholi held crucial discussions in New Delhi with the Congress top brass, conveying a stern message against any move to replace Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

These leaders are said to have warned that a leadership change at this juncture may adversely dent the government's image and the party's prospects.

The sources indicated that Jarkiholi invoked the AHINDA (minorities, backward classes and Dalits) factor, asserting that the social coalition remains the backbone of the Congress's electoral success.

He reportedly stressed that if leadership change becomes unavoidable, the top post must remain within the AHINDA fold, failing which Siddaramaiah should continue.

This development comes amid efforts by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who has been reportedly exerting pressure on the top brass in New Delhi, for leadership change in the state.

However, Congress insiders stated that Jarkiholi's "silent strategy" has effectively stalled these efforts, cooling tensions within the party.

Meanwhile in a significant development, Kharge is learnt to have conveyed that there is no immediate plan to change the chief minister. The move follows representations by several senior leaders, urging the high command to end internal strife in the state unit.

AHINDA leaders and organisations are rallying behind Siddaramaiah, cautioning that any attempt to unseat him could lead to a crisis in the party.

Many MLAs considered loyal to Siddaramaiah are said to be camping in Delhi, signalling a show of strength and backing his continuation. The coordinated push is being viewed as a decisive move to counter leadership change talks and influence any potential cabinet reshuffle.

For now, the high command's intervention appears to have enforced a temporary truce between the warring factions.

No decision on political issues yet, meeting soon: Kharge

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI
@Kalaburagi

The Congress high command has not yet taken any decision on political issues of Karnataka, clarified AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge here on Friday. He was referring to the power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar who is aspiring for the former's post, as well as the growing chorus for a cabinet reshuffle with aspirants making a beeline to New Delhi to curry favour with the high command.

Speaking at a press conference at his residence here, Kharge said the top three leaders in AICC -- former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and himself -- would hold a meeting to discuss the issues and take a decision. "Everybody should abide by the decision of the high command," he said. Kharge added that the date of the meeting has not yet been decided, but it will be announced once it is fixed.

The AICC chief's clarification comes following reports in a section of the media (not The New Indian Express) attributing Kharge as saying that there would be no change in the Karnataka CM's post in the near future.

MLC B K Hariprasad greets Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru on Friday

HARIPRASAD CALLS ON CM, HOLDS MEETING WITH DR G, OTHERS

Bengaluru: Amid the change in leadership speculations, senior Congress leader and MLC B K Hariprasad met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at the latter's residence here on Friday evening. The duo held a closed door meeting for about half an hour. He might have apprised the CM about the party top brass' moves after the results of five states' assemblies which will be out on May 4, according to sources. Hariprasad also held a meeting with Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara and Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan at former MLC M C Venugopal's apartment. They discussed pitching Parameshwara for the CM's post on Dalit quota, if the high command makes up its mind for the change in leadership, according to sources. Hariprasad is a strong contender for a ministerial berth if the party high command gives its nod for the reshuffle of the Siddaramaiah cabinet. ENS

AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge and his wife Radhabai light a lamp in front of a Buddha statue on the occasion of Buddha Purnima in Kalaburagi on Friday

World needs Buddha not Yuddha: Kharge

Kalaburagi: In today's global scenario, the message of Buddha has never been more relevant and the world needs the principles of Buddhism, which seeks peace, said AICC President and leader of the opposition Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday. Speaking at a press conference at his residence here, Kharge said most people in the world are in favour of peace which is the main message of Buddha. "If we ask people whether they want Yuddha (war) or Buddha, they certainly pick the latter," he said, referring to the US/Israel-Iran war. He said the war is causing a lot of problems in the world, affecting hundreds of countries. "Due to crude oil shortage, prices of petrol, diesel and gas cylinders are increasing. The price of commercial cylinder (in India)has seen an increase of Rs 993. The prime minister of our country should not take sides with anybody and embrace anyone," Kharge said. ENS

Rahul sent 'referee' Kharge to fix Cong govt: Ashoka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

TAKING a dig at the Congress government over its internal turmoil, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka on Friday said Karnataka is not any "laboratory for the Gandhi family's political experiments."

He accused the ruling party leadership of being consumed by internal power struggles that is affecting governance in the state. "While leaders are engaged in a fight for power, key sectors are suffering. Infrastructure is crumbling, investments are slowing, and governance is collapsing," Ashoka said.

Taking to X, Ashoka said Karnataka is paying the price for the "never-ending power tussle" between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar. "We in the BJP have no interest in Congress' internal battles. But when this never-ending ego clash begins to paralyse governance, it becomes our duty to speak. For more than 1,000 days, the state has seen a government that is distracted, divided and directionless. Now, the latest rumours of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge being 'deployed' from Delhi to fix Bengaluru confirms total leadership failure in the state," he stated.

He told Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, "If two leaders can't co-exist and work together, you send a referee from Delhi to run Karnataka? The people of Karnataka did not vote for a five-year factional wrestling match. They voted for a stable, functioning government."

Speaking to reporters later, Ashoka said the proverb 'When two people fight, the third one benefits' has come true as Kharge is also now making efforts to become chief minister. He said Kharge has asked for more time for discussions. If that happens, the CM change will be delayed further. By then, elections will be very close. Just like in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Congress will face total destruction, he said. Ashoka also criticised the CM's earlier announcement to go on inspection tour of Bengaluru city once every 15 days. But he hasn't done even one in three months. No preparations were made for the rain, resulting in lives being lost. "When people demanded justice for these deaths, he hid his own mistakes and took action against officials instead," he said.

BJP state president BY Vijayendra said the government is facing a financial crisis and the administration has collapsed. They are not taking up any development work, and are instead busy making allegations against the Union government. "Congress MLAs from Karnataka are parading in Delhi most of the times," he said.

Govt rolls out 8 guarantees to revamp public schools

BANSY KALAPPA @Bengaluru

RIDING on the back of the recent record-breaking SSLC results, the Karnataka government has announced a comprehensive package of eight guarantees aimed at overhauling the state's government school system and restoring public faith in public education.

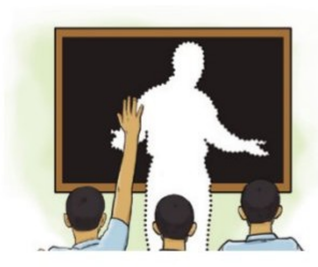
The initiative, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and School Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa, focuses on tackling long-standing issues of teacher shortages, infrastructure deficits and outdated teaching methods. Officials describe the measures as a decisive step to make government schools competitive with private institutions.

At the heart of the reforms is a firm commitment to resolve the acute shortage of teachers. The government has asserted that all primary schools will have one dedicated teacher per class up to Class 5. From Class 6 onwards, subject-wise specialist teachers will be recruited and posted. This will address complaints of one teacher handling multiple classrooms.

In a significant move responding to parental demand, the government has promised greater flexibility in the medium of instruction.

English-medium education will be made available across all government schools, with teachers already receiving specialised training to deliver quality lessons in English. Around 900 government schools are being upgraded to the Karnataka Public Schools (KPS), which will offer bilingual instruction in both Kannada and English.

The reform package places strong emphasis on preparing students for the digital future. Computer education will be introduced in a phased manner starting from Class 1, while basic exposure to artificial intelligence will begin from Class 3. Dedicated computer faculty members will be appointed in all Karnataka Public Schools to support this transition.



The guarantees also extend to holistic development. The government has pledged to recruit specialised teachers for physical education, art and music within the year. To allow teachers to focus purely on academics, separate non-teaching staff will be hired to handle administrative responsibilities, thereby reducing the burden on educators.

Another key pillar is continuous student assessment and parental involvement. A lesson-based assessment system will track individual progress, complemented by parent-teacher meetings scheduled once every two months for regular feedback.

From Class 6 onwards, the government plans to introduce skill-based education and coaching for competitive examinations, aiming to better equip students for higher studies and future careers.

Minister Bangarappa said, "We are doing this to strengthen our education system further. Students who are in government schools need to be offered the very best and we are only facilitating that. This is not the end; we will continue to work on making our schools better each day."

Sringeri postal ballot recount today, Raje Gowda, Jeevaraj face crucial test

B THIPPERUDRAPPA
@ Chikkamagaluru

IT will be a tense test for Sringeri Congress MLA TD Raje Gowda and defeated BJP candidate DN Jeevaraj as postal ballots cast in the 2023 Sringeri Assembly election will be counted on Saturday to determine the winner of the poll, as per a Karnataka High Court order.

On Thursday, election returning officer and Deputy Commissioner Nagaraj NM met all party leaders, including Raje Gowda and Jeevaraj, at the office-cum-court hall. In 2023, 1,822 postal votes had been cast. Of them, 279 were rejected, while three were for NOTA. A total of 1,540 postal votes were taken up for consideration and after counting, Gowda was declared the winner by a narrow margin of 201 votes.

Election officials prepare for the ballot recount in Sringeri | EXPRESS

Jeevaraj, who came second, later approached the high court, contending that the then election officer had failed to heed his request for a recount of postal ballots. He argued that the rejection of 279 postal votes had fuelled doubts over the election outcome. In its order on April 6, the high court directed the district administration to reverify the 279 rejected votes and recount all postal ballots before announcing the result afresh.

DC Nagaraj told reporters that arrangements have been made at IDSG Degree College for the recount in the presence of candidates and polling agents. During the re-verification process, if any postal votes initially rejected are found to be valid, they will be added to the already accepted valid votes. Thereafter, all postal votes will be recounted. Once the entire procedure is completed, the recounting documentation will be submitted to the high court and the Election Commission.

The DC also announced that the liquor sale is prohibited from 6 am to 1 pm on Saturday.

Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu has announced that Labour Addas will be set up across the State to support workers and 15 such centres will come up in major cities and towns in the first phase

Madras HC: FIR alone not enough to trigger ED probe

Says ECIR can be filed only after authorised ED officer is satisfied there are 'proceeds of crime'

R SIVAKUMAR @ Chennai

IN a significant ruling, the Madras High Court has held that mere registration of an FIR on a predicate offence does not mandate the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to register a case on money laundering but the subjective satisfaction of the authorised officer of the agency is essential for initiating such proceedings.

Dismissing petitions seeking directions to the ED to register Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) based on FIRs registered by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) against seven former AIADMK ministers, the court said the central agency is free to decide on initiating money laundering proceedings under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against them.

The ruling was given by the first bench of Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G Arul Murugan on petitions filed by DMK MP R Girirajan seeking ED action on the ex-ministers for alleged corruption. "The registration of FIR in a predicate offence does not ipso facto mandate the ED to register an ECIR, but it is only based on the satisfaction of the authorised officer from the predicate case and the materials available. This court cannot substitute the satisfaction of ED, which is to be arrived at from the materials available, in accordance with the PML Act," the bench said in a recent order.

Petitioner Girirajan had filed the petitions seeking ED to register cases on the basis of FIRs registered against former ministers SP Velumani, P Thangamani, C Vijaya Baskar, MR Vijayabaskar, R Kamaraj, KC Veeramani, KP Anbalagan, former MLA B Sathyanarayanan alias T Nagar Sathya, and former president of Central Cooperative Bank in Salem R Elangovan by the DVAC for 'large scale corruption' and 'misappropriation of public funds'.

Pointing out that the cases were registered for offences under Section 13(2) r/w 13(1)(e) and Section 13(2) r/w 13(1)(b), Girirajan noted that the offences committed by them constitute 'scheduled offences' under the PMLA but ED has not yet registered money laundering cases against them. The CJ bench said, "PMLA does not contemplate that wherever the case is registered invoking scheduled offences, the ED is mandated to register an ECIR. It is only based on the satisfaction of the authorised officer that there are proceeds of crime, the authority would proceed further under the Act."

DMK confident of win despite mixed exit poll results

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

AMID mixed forecasts by exit polls, which hinted at the possibility of a hung Assembly and brinkmanship by Congress's TN in-charge Girish Chodankar, who reiterated the party's wish for a share in power, DMK president and Chief Minister **MK Stalin** on Friday expressed confidence that his party would win a decisive mandate on May 4. Meanwhile, DMDK leader Premalatha Vijayakanth, another DMK ally, said that she will reveal her stance on power-sharing on May 4 after the results.

Speaking at an event organised as part of May Day celebration in Chennai, Stalin said, "The benefit of the efforts put in by the party workers will be reaped on May 4. There would be no change. I am saying not just on the basis of the exit polls, but on the basis of the feelings of the party workers that I see."

He vsaid, "The results will be out in a couple of days and I believe you all will receive good news." The state would continue with the DMK's principle of "everything for everyone", he added. Meanwhile, rebuffing Chodankar's assertion that the party will no longer play a neutral role in TN politics, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K Selvaperunthagai on Friday reiterated the party's unflinching allegiance to the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance.

The DMK alliance would secure more than 200 seats, Selvaperunthagai said, adding that exit polls are narratives and not the real mood of the people. "Whatever is being said about the result is all said by the media and not by the people. We are confident that CM Stalin will be sworn in as the CM once again," Selvaperunthagai told reporters.

DMDK leader Premalatha Vijayakanth, however, seems to be keeping her party's options open. Speaking to reporters in Chennai, she said CM Stalin would return to power, and her party candidates will win all the 10 seats they had contested.

NO REST ON MAY DAY

As the world celebrates International Workers' Day, a labourer pulls a tricycle loaded with discarded tyres in Chennai's blistering heat on Friday | P JAWAHAR

Centre trying to amend 29 labour laws: Karandlaje

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hubballi

STATING that the Centre is committed to providing various facilities to workers, Union Minister of State for Labour Shobha Karandlaje on Friday said efforts have been made to amend 29 labour laws and implement them under four labour codes. Among these, the Social Security Code is the most important and will be implemented to provide social security, pension and ESI facilities to all workers, she said.

She said the Centre pays Rs 10,000-13,000 crore annually to EPFO. A 1% cess is collected from the states, amounting to around Rs 15,000 crore, and it is being utilised effectively.

The workers are now provided only free medical check-up camps and kits, and there have been several irregularities in distributing benefits to them. These would be investigated, Karandlaje said and added that a 100-bed ESIC hospital will be inaugurated in Doddaballapur on May 3. Later, speaking at a Labour Day celebration, she said that even after 78 years of Independence, many laws date back to the British era.

Union Minister of State for Labour Shobha Karandlaje speaks at a Labour Day celebration programme in Hubballi

India needs laws rooted in its own culture and welfare. Labour codes are being implemented to ensure social security, equal pay for equal work, as well as ESI and pension benefits for all.

Karandlaje said 90% of workers are currently outside ESI and EPF coverage, and the unorganised sector employs a major portion of the workforce. "Organised workers receive benefits, but unorganised workers often do not, and these benefits must be extended to them," she said.

Man dies, 8 injured in blast at pharma lab

ENS @ Nalgonda

One worker died and eight others sustained injuries on Friday after a reactor exploded at Nosh Pharma Lab on the outskirts of Pittampally village in Chityala mandal of Nalgonda district. This was the second accident at the unit within the span of a month.

The victim was identified as B Balakrishna, 30, from China Kaparthi village. Police said the explosion occurred in the company's third block while raw materials were being filled into the reactor. The blast triggered flames and thick smoke across the premises. Fire personnel reached the site and brought the situation under control.

Eight workers sustained serious injuries and were shifted for treatment. Chityala police have registered a case and begun an investigation.

Nalgonda collector B Chandrasekhar and SP Sharath Chandra Pawar visited the site. The SP said operations at the facility have been suspended pending inquiry.

3-year-old dies after getting locked inside parked car

KARUR: A three-year-old boy died of suspected suffocation after accidentally getting locked inside a parked car at Kazhugur village near Kulithalai in Karur district on Thursday. The deceased has been identified as Sanjeev. On Thursday morning around 10 am, the parents stepped out briefly to buy items for a temple ritual at Velliangiri, leaving Sanjeev playing near the house along with his six-year-old brother. Police said the elder sibling later left to play near a small temple located about 100 metres away. During the time, Sanjeev is believed to have entered the parked car, and inadvertently locked himself inside. Unable to open the door and trapped inside the enclosed vehicle, the boy is suspected to have suffocated to death. Speaking to TNIE, a senior police official, "As the car remained covered with a flex sheet and the house was situated slightly away from neighbouring residences, the child's presence inside the vehicle went unnoticed for a considerable period."

ISRO readies 1st uncrewed Gaganyaan flight; plans 27 missions this fiscal

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has listed 27 space missions for execution this financial year (2026-27), four of which pertain to the Gaganyaan mission. In the Annual Report 2025-26, prepared by the Department of Space and released on April 29, ISRO also listed the execution of five SSLV missions, three Earth observation satellite missions and two communication and navigation satellite missions.

After the failure of PSLV-C62 mission during the third stage, ISRO was said to have suffered a setback, the second consecutive failure after May 2025. This fiscal, it has listed double the missions compared to 2025-26.

In the report, ISRO has laid stress on the Gaganyaan mission, after detailing defence and civilian missions and projects undertaken. According to the ISRO team, "A human rated space transportation system based on LVM3 configuration (HLVM3) has been qualified and is ready for undertaking the first un-manned Gaganyaan mission. Also the development of the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) with reusable technology has been initiated to meet the expanded vision of the Indian Space programme."

The team added that the development of advanced propulsion technologies, including LOX-Methane propulsion, semi-cryogenic propulsion, electric propulsion and air-breathing propulsion have been taken up.

In the report, ISRO listed out a series of works undertaken for the Gaganyaan mission. It highlighted the need for establishing terrestrial linking channels.

ISRO scientists noted that terrestrial links have been established between the Indian Naval Station and Sriharikota range, the Gaganyaan Mission Control Centre in Bengaluru and Gaganyaan Control Facility.

"The link between the Gaganyaan Mission Control Centre, Gaganyaan Control Facility and Crew Module Recovery Centre at Delhi has been established and tested. A contract has also been signed with the Swedish Space Corporation for ground station support for crewed and uncrewed missions. The Deed of License for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Australia, executed for the establishment of a ground station terminal has also been signed," the report detailed.

For the health of Gaganyatris, ISRO and the Department of Science and Technology signed a framework memorandum of understanding on cooperation in space medicine with Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology.

The report noted that this MoU will ensure cooperation in the field of niche space medicine, which will benefit the national human space programme and spur innovations and developments in the fields of human physiological studies, behavioural health studies, biomedical support systems, radiation biology and medicine, countermeasures for improving human health and performance in space environment, telemedicine and communication protocols and crew medical kits for space missions. The team said the programme will also create opportunities for studies and experiments, especially in the field of space medicine.

In the report, ISRO highlighted that the Indian space sector is now supported by 450 industries and over 130 academic institutions. It is also currently pursuing around 2000 research and developmental activities, which are focussing on multiple key areas.

The list includes stage recovery and reuse, reusable launch vehicle, semi-cryo engine and stage, LOX-Methane engine, air breathing/ hybrid propulsion based rockets, advanced materials and manufacturing, advanced inertial systems, low-cost spacecraft, inter-linking of satellite networks, on-orbit servicing, docking, space robotics, lunar sample return, quantum communication, electric propulsion, advanced scientific payloads, space-based surveillance, atomic clock, travelling wave tube amplifiers for communication payloads, technologies for sustained human space missions, regenerative life support systems, rendezvous and docking, inflatable habitats, human factor and engineering studies and space situational awareness.

Odisha skeleton case: Man gets help from several govt schemes

AGENCIES @Bhubaneswar/Keonjhar

ODISHA man who hit the headlines for carrying his sister's skeleton to a bank as proof of death to withdraw her money has been made the beneficiary of a slew of government schemes and received private donations. After the intervention of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the district administration of Keonjhar provided immediate social security benefits to 50-year-old Jeetu Munda, officials said on Friday.

Munda and his brother's house have been provided with electricity connections within hours of the visit of Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC), Northern Division, S K Mohapatra, to his village Dianali under Patana block on Thursday to inquire into the matter.

He has also been enrolled in a state government scheme for monthly financial assistance, while the authorities have issued him a ration card through which he would now avail 35 kg of rice free of cost every month, officials said. Immediately after the skeleton episode came to the fore on April 27, the state government arranged a death certificate and the legal heir of his dead sister and the money deposited in her name was given to Jeetu Munda within 24 hours. The tribal man had exhumed the skeletal remains of his sister Kalra Munda (56), who died in January. He then walked around three kilometres to the Maliposi branch of the Odisha Grameen Bank and produced it before the official as proof of her death. A video of Munda carrying the skeleton has gone viral.

Bird flu: Authorities step up surveillance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ON Friday morning, however, 15 chickens died at Bommanahalli poultry and the samples have been sent to the laboratory, the DC added. In connection with the unusual death of chickens, the owners of the poultry farm and the neighboring households have been advised to stay at home and to bury the chicken waste deep in the ground.

The DC said that precautionary measures such as spraying sodium chlorite have been taken at poultry farms. Committees have been formed in all taluks of the district and all precautionary measures have been taken, the DC added. It is advisable for those who eat chicken to eat well-cooked food.

"It's for the first time H5N1 is reported in the district and the source of infection to the peacocks is yet to be ascertained," said Assistant Conservator of Forests V Pavithra.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform General Public that our client/s are intending to purchase the schedule property belonging to (i) Smt.Syeda Sakina Hasan, wife of Sri.Omar Abdullah Shaikh Madar, Aged about 31 years, (ii) Miss.Syeda Safa Hasan, daughter of Sri.Qazi Shah Abul Hasan, Aged about 27 years and (iii) Miss.Syeda Khadijah Hasan, daughter of Sri.Qazi Shah Abul Hasan, Aged about 23 years, all are residing at No.4, Ranoji Rao Road, Basavanagudi, Bangalore - 560 004;

Any, person, having any claim over the schedule property claiming through the predecessors in title or any other person, may lodge their objections or claims, in writing with all supporting documentary evidence by speed post with regard to such claim with the undersigned within 10 (ten) days hereof, failing which our client/s will proceed to conclude the Sale Transaction. Any claims lodged thereafter will not be entertained by our client/s;

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of entire property bearing Municipal No.149/1 (earlier site bearing CITB No.149, later Municipal No.1), situated at Fifth Cross, Second Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore, within the limits and administration of Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, Bangalore, Corporation Ward No.153-Jayanagar (old ward No.50), PID No.50-56-1, EPID No:6781916047, together with structures standing thereon and bounded on the:

East by : Site bearing CITB No.148;
West by : Seventh Main Road;
North by : Site bearing CITB No.140;
South by : Fifth Cross Road;
MEASURING: East to West : 40 ft.;
North to South:60 ft.;
In all ad-measuring 2,400 sq.ft.;

N S RACHANA
N C JANARDHAN, ADVOCATES
Rachana Law Associates, "Lakshmideep", I Floor, No:2980, 17th Cross, Banashankari II Stage, BANGALORE - 560 070
PH : 9731810810 / 9886284325
Dt:01-05-2026

BEFORE THE DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL – II, B.S.N.L. Building, 4th Floor, Telephone Hoouse, Rajbhavan Road, Bengaluru - 560001
O.A. NO. 1547/2020

BETWEEN
CANARA BANK
Avenue Road Branch, No. 110-115, Avenue Road, Bengaluru - 560002
By its Power of Attorney Holder and Senior Manager,
Sri. Avinash Kumar,
S/o Sri. Chandra Kishor Lal Das,
E-Mail ID: cb402@canarabank.com
Mobile No.: 9629596989
PAN No.: AAACC6106G
.....APPLICANT
AND
M/s. SIERRA CONSTRUCTIONS (P) LTD & OTHERS
.....DEFENDANT

To Defendant No.14
Smt. A.C. SUJATHA,
D/o late B.S. Channappa, W/o A.S. Nagesh,
Aged : Major. R/o No. 74, Gurukurpa, 13th Main, Hanumanthanagar, Bengaluru - 560050

NOTICE ISSUED UNDER RULE 23 (VIII) OF THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (PROCEDURE) RULES 1993

WHEREAS, the Applicant has instituted an application under Section 19 of the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 against you for recovery of sum of Rs. 13,32,88,050-74/- (Rupees Thirteen Crore Thirty Two Lakhs Eighty Eight Thousand Fifty and Seventy Four Paise Only) together with current and future interest and other reliefs. The above Defendant is therefore, hereby directed to appear before the Tribunal in person or through an Advocate or through authorized agents in Support of their defence to show cause within 30 days from the date of publication or on 04.06.2026 at 10.30 AM as to why the reliefs prayed for should not be granted.

Take notice that in case of default, the application will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this **25th day of March 2026.**

REGISTRAR
DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL – II
BENGALURU
SD/-

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank
(A Government of India Undertaking)
ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT BRANCH-1
 # 86, Second Floor, Spencer Towers, M G Road, Bengaluru-560001.
Phone No. 080- 25310064, Mob No.94835 44116, E-mail Id: Cb2366@canarabank.com.

POSSESSION NOTICE [SECTION 13(4)] (For Immovable Property)

Whereas: The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Canara Bank under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act 54 of 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice 13(2) dated **11.02.2026** calling upon the Borrower/s: **(1) M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd., I)** 1st Floor, No.18, SNS Plaza Road, Kumara Krupa Road, Bangalore North-560001. **II)** No.11, 3rd Floor, Railway Parallel Road, Nehrunagar, Bengaluru-560020. **(2) Ms. Sharvani Sachidanand Director And Guarantor Of M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd.,** D/o Budagere Sachidanand, No.201, Hanathe, 4th C Main, 3rd Block, 3rd Stage, Basaveshwara Nagar, Bangalore North-560079. **(3) Mrs Pinky Dhanpal Sakaria Director And Guarantor Of M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd.,** W/o Dhanpal Sakaria, No.33/1, Sakaria Nivas, Neharu nagar, Seshadripuram, 1st Cross, Bangalore North-560020. **(4) Smt. Shanti Devi Guarantor Of M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd.,** W/o Tejraj Bantiya, No.50/30, Yamuna Bai Road, Opp E Tv Office, Madhavanagar, Bangalore North-560001. **(5) Sri. Dhanpal Sakaria Guarantor And Mortgagor Of M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd.,** S/o Inderkumar Devichandji Sakaria, No.33/1, 1st Cross, Nehrunagar, Banglore-560020. **(6) Sri.Nirmal Bantiya Guarantor Of M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd.,** S/o Tejraj Bantiya, No.50 (30), Yamuna Bai Road, Opp E Tv Office, Madhavanagar, Bangalore North-560001. **(7) Mr. Suresh Kumar Represented By Poa Holder Mrs. Pinky Dhanpal Sakaria Partner Of M/s Dhruvi Builders And** Constructions Registered Office At No.33/1, 1st Cross Road, Nehru Nagar, Bangalore-560020. **(8) M/s Dhruvi Builders And Constructions (Represented By Mrs. Pinky Dhanpal Sakaria And Mr. Suresh Kumar, Represented By Poa Holder Mrs. Pinky Dhanpal Sakaria) Mortgagor Of M/s Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd.,** Registered Office At No.33/1, 1st Cross Road, Nehru Nagar, Bangalore-560020. to repay the amount mentioned in the notice, being **Rs.5,89,02,681.32 (Rupees Five Crores Eighty-Nine Lakhs Two Thousand Six Hundred Eighty One And Paise Thirty Two only)** within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under section 13 (4) of the said Act, read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said Rule on this **28th day of April of the year 2026.**

The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Canara Bank for an amount of **Rs.6,05,24,268.48 (Rupees Six Crore Five Lakhs Twenty Four Thousands Two Hundred Sixty Eight and Forty Eight Paisa Only) as on 20.04.2026** plus interest and charges thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of Section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable Property :

Name of title Holder : M/S Rewards Sourcing Pvt Ltd
Movable : Hypothecation of Stocks and Book Debts
(1) Name of title Holder : Smt Shanthi Devi
Immovable : All that piece and parcel of property A Three Bedroom residential Row house/villament bearing No.2, constructed in Ground + First Floor + Terrace, constructed on the B Schedule property known as "COURTYARD", in all measuring 2388.035 square feet of undivided land area, 819.16 square feet of additional garden area, vitrified flooring along with one covered car parking space with SY No. 163/3 and 163/2 situated at Varthur Village, Varthur hobli, earlier Bangalore South Taluk, presently Bengaluru East taluk with super built up area of flat 2581.66 sqft and Bounded by : East by : Garden, West by: Road, North by: Row house/Villament no 1 and South by: Row house/Villament no 3.
(2) Name of title Holder : Mr Dhanpal Sakaria
Immovable : All that piece and parcel of apartment bearing Flat No.201 in second floor with 2 car parking at Kalpavruksh Homes No.8 Municipal No 5, PID No.77-60-5, 1st Main Road, Ward No.77, Chakravarthi Iyengar Extension, Seshadripuram, Bengaluru 560020 measuring North to South 40Feet, East to West 60Feet, Super Built up area 2400Sq Ft, Undivided Share of land 600 Sq ft. Bounded By : East by: Dr. Prasanna Kumar House, West by: 1ST main road Chakravarthi Iyengar extension/Layout, North By: M R Sarojini Devi House, South By: Krishna Iyyengar House.
(3) Name of title Holder : M/s Dhruvi Builders and Constructions Represented by partners Mrs. Pinky Dhanpal Sakaria and Sri Suresh Kumar
Immovable : All that piece and parcel of Residential Site No.93, in the layout "Nitesh Rio" formed as per the plan approved by Bangalore Mysore Infrastructure Corridor Area Planning Authority out of the land in S Y No.20/2 of Uttarahalli, Manavarthekaval Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk duly converted for residential purposes as per the official Memorandum No. B.Dis.ALN.SR (S) 239/03-04 dt 20.10.2003, issued by the Deputy Commisioner, Bengaluru District, measuring 3560Sq Ft and bounded by : East By : Site No.69 & 70, West By : Road, North By :Park, South By :Site No.92.

Date : 28.04.2026
Place : Bengaluru

Sd/-Authorized Officer
Canara Bank

EDITORIAL

"The greatest single quality of democracy in the present age is decentralisation" — Ram Manohar Lohia

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.
— Ramnath Goenka

U.S. FED'S POLICY REVIEW UNDERLINES UNCERTAINTY AHEAD OF TRUMP-XI MEET

THE US Federal Reserve left its key policy rates unchanged at 3.5-3.75 percent on Wednesday. While this was expected, Fed Chair Jerome Powell's final policy review was not without a few surprises. For the first time in 34 years, the decision saw four dissenting votes, with one member arguing for a rate cut and three others opposing the use of 'easing bias' in the policy statement. The dissent vote came amid pressure from President Donald Trump to cut rates and it's likely that the next Fed Chair, Kevin Warsh, will face the same pressure. Warsh has vowed to uphold the central bank's independence, which Powell said was at risk. Even though Powell's term as chair ends on May 15, he will remain on the Fed board as a governor until investigations against him are over, to ensure that the central bank makes decisions based on analysis rather than political outcomes.

The Fed meeting warned about the risks to inflation and growth from the Iran war. Acknowledging uncertainty due to the conflict, it held rates steady even as the global oil price benchmark tore past $126 a barrel. Lower rates boost the economy, but also tend to fuel inflation. Often, central banks raise rates when inflation is high and cut rates when the economy is weak, to encourage spending and investing. The US's March inflation soared past the Fed's 2 percent target to 3.3 percent—the highest since May 2024—while the country's growth in the January-March quarter stood at a modest 2 percent, up from 0.5 percent in the previous quarter which was hampered by the longest federal government shutdown. Lastly, the largest economy's unemployment rate stood at 4.3 percent, with hiring at its strongest pace in recent months. Yet, the Fed decided to hold rates while awaiting clarity on the Gulf conflict's length.

The upcoming US-China summit on May 14 is also weighing heavy on global markets. Weeks ahead of it, Beijing rolled out restrictions on foreign companies seeking to shift sourcing of critical minerals and other goods away from China. Analysts see the move as undercutting the US's effort to reduce supply-chain dependence on China. If such provocative regulations deepen, it can have a cascading effect on global supply chains at a time the world is already grappling with the consequences of war.

PERSISTENCE, DEPTH BEHIND INDIAN WOMEN'S CHESS FEAT

R Vaishali's victory at the Candidates tournament resonated beyond the chess board. It was another glimpse into the transformational world of women's chess in India and its ascent into the realms of greatness. Quite a few records were set in the picturesque island of Cyprus that hosted the eight-player tournament. Vaishali became the first Indian woman to win Candidates, making her eligible to challenge world champion Ju Wenjun of China. Viswanathan Anand won five men's world titles and D Gukesh secured one in 2024, but no Indian has won the women's world title yet. This isn't all. Last year, Divya Deshmukh created history by winning the World Cup and securing the final grandmaster norm at age 19—only the fourth Indian woman to do so after Koneru Humpy, D Harika and Vaishali. After a long era when Humpy and Harika were only Indian stars on the women's chess firmament, the sky has remarkably broadened.

For various reasons, women in the modern era have had shorter careers in the sport. Humpy has managed to break the stereotype by continuing to play at the highest level at age 39. And all our grandmasters are pushing hard to bridge the gap with the Chinese, the foremost practitioners of the sport in recent decades. At the Budapest Olympiad in 2024, India didn't stand a chance of winning going by the seedings. Yet, Indian women dominated the event.

Now there is belief that whatever Indian men can achieve in chess, women can too. But the confidence has come with hard work. For Vaishali, the last 10 months were extremely challenging—she had hit a low and lost the joy of playing the game. She was struggling mentally when she sought advice to resuscitate her career. Things slowly changed. Now, the 24-year-old is on the crest of a wave.

When Anand became world champion for the first time, chess had its first eureka moment in India. A Vaishali win in the title match can have a similar effect. Even if she does not become world champion, her popularity will inspire more young girls to take up the game. There's hope beyond Vaishali and Deshmukh, too. A few weeks ago, A S Sharvaanica, widely touted to be a grandmaster in waiting, became a world champion in the under-12 age category.

QUICK TAKE

AI, NOT AIYO

THERE could hardly be a greater irony. This week, South Africa withdrew its AI policy draft because it contained mistakes dreamed up by AI hallucinations. What was supposed to be Africa's first AI policy became an embarrassment for the continent's largest economy. But the error behind it was human. When we use powerful new technologies without fully understanding the pitfalls, the fault is not with the machines. We must remember that it took millions of hours of diligent fact-checking by volunteer editors to clean up vast swathes of Wikipedia—a job that's constantly going on. At the same time, all governments including our own must heed South Africa's original intent—to set up an AI ethics board and a regulatory authority while promoting the industry.

THE end of democracy in the US will be perfectly democratic," wrote Andrew Yang and Stephen Marche in their 2023 political novel *The Last Election*. Broadly, it shows the vulnerability of electoral democracy to political manipulations. Such aberrations pose serious threats to the future of American democracy.

In India, the menace manifested even prior to independence, in the legislative bodies designed by the British. The post-independence experience shows that defections often occur due to political or material ambitions rather than ideological differences or varying policy perspectives. To fight this betrayal, the 10th Schedule was introduced in the Constitution in 1985 containing "provisions as to disqualification on ground of defection". But as a device to curb defection, it has turned into a failed experiment.

Paragraph 2 of the schedule says that voluntary abandonment of membership or abstention from voting in disregard to directions of the party under whose banner one was elected will result in disqualification. However, paragraph 4 says that the merger of political parties will not result in disqualification. Those opposing the merger can sit as a separate group. Paragraph 4(2) clarifies that at least two-thirds of the members should agree for the merger to make it lawful.

Recently, when Raghav Chadha and six other elected members of the Rajya Sabha opted to switch to the BJP, they purportedly relied on this constitutional indulgence—which could be problematic, at least going by the constitutional text. If the political party has not opted for a merger, whether a group can claim the benefit of being two-thirds of the legislative party's members to avoid action is an issue requiring judicial resolution.

Again, according to paragraph 5 of the 10th Schedule, the decision on disqualification must be taken by the Chairperson or Speaker of the House. As in the case of Governors, there is a constitutional assumption regarding their impartiality, which is an illusion going by India's experience. Their decisions are often neither fair nor judicious. Also, depending upon political inclinations, Speakers can either expedite the decision or delay it indefinitely. Given such a situation, it is time to think about an independent judicial tribunal to deal with such issues.

The 10th Schedule does not present any time limit for the Speaker's decision. This has led to judicial fixation of a limit, as the Supreme Court did in *Keisham Meghachandra Singh* (2020). The Speaker or Chairperson's decision is also amenable to judicial review now. In *Kihoto Hollohan* (1992), the Supreme Court held that paragraph 7 of the schedule, which bars the court's jurisdiction, is unconstitutional. Yet, the time it could take for the judicial process to conclude is a matter of concern. The adverse impact of defection—such as regime change—often occurs while the process is dragging on.

The *Kihoto Hollohan* majority judgement's optimism about the adequacy and efficacy of the 10th Schedule requires reconsideration. Though concerns were raised in the case about the presumed impartiality of Speakers, the majority on the bench was not prepared to accept it. This negates the lessons emanating from Speakers' conduct in an era of turncoats.

Political leaders have also used the device of resignation to topple a government and escape the ambit of the 10th Schedule. Resignation cannot be termed as defection. But in each situation, it serves to reduce a regime's majority. This, too, is a situation that the law is unable to tackle.

In an electoral system based on political parties, defections are not only intrinsically unethical, but also lead to unethical consequences. As researchers Ishan Mhapsekar and Ryan Joseph of Jindal Global Law School have written in *NLIU Law Review*, "When ministers defect in the hopes of greater political power and to bring down a government, the defectors are rewarded for disloyalty, while the loyalists are taxed by loss of office."

Group resignations from state legislative bodies have been effectively used to sabotage governments. The Congress government in Madhya Pradesh fell in 2020 when 22 legislators led by Jyotiraditya Scindia chose to resign; many of those who switched sides got re-elected. In 2019, the Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) coalition in Karnataka faced mass resignations of the ruling combine's MLAs that torpedoed the government.

Equally concerning is voters' approach to defection. One doubts if voters can mark their protest on such issues when they exercise their franchise.

Now, the promulgation of an anti-defection law is not an easy task. Most advanced democracies do not have such enactments. Sometimes, democratic maturity acts as a political check against defection. Yet, the issue of floor-crossing is not alien to modern constitutions. And so there are anti-defection laws in South Africa, Israel, New Zealand and Pakistan.

One might ask why India chose to make an inadequate, imperfect and often ineffective constitutional amendment to tackle the issue. But then, if it was made by way of a statute, it could have been altered from time to time by those in power to suit their political requirements. In South Africa, Israel and Pakistan, regimes have been criticised for altering anti-defection laws to meet immediate political targets. Given that statutory amendment would be more vulnerable to judicial review than a constitutional amendment, the decision to add the 10th Schedule with corresponding changes in other provisions of the Constitution cannot be faulted.

Yet, as demonstrated by India's experience, the schedule has not acted as an adequate device to curb defection. Though it was well intended, it happened to be an inadequate supplement to a Constitution that did not deal in detail with the inner and outer dynamism of political parties.

Therefore, the 10th Schedule needs to be substituted with a comprehensive constitutional amendment that meets all the possible challenges. After identifying the deficits in the schedule, we need to re-imagine our anti-defection law. It would require constitutional will and an imaginative legislative exercise. This is difficult, but not an impossible task.

Legislative statesmanship occurs only very rarely in populist regimes of our times. But its significance is only to be underlined in our deliberations for a more legitimate and fairer polity.

(Views are personal)
(kaleeswaramraj@gmail.com)

The 10th Schedule of the Constitution has not proved effective in curbing defection. We need a comprehensive amendment that meets all the challenges thrown up by a dynamic party system

NEED TO TURN THE LAW ON TURNCOATS

KALEESWARAM RAJ
Lawyer, Supreme Court of India

SOURAV ROY

DEMOCRACY DIES THOUSAND DEATHS

IN the lull before counting day, India is beguiling itself with poll paraphernalia. Everyone is soaking up exit polls, whose chief function is not to inform but to entertain. We follow them for the same reason that we read horoscopes. On the basis of minimal data, they claim to predict who is going to win on Monday and the talking heads on TV take it from there, spinning a yarn half as long as the *Ramcharitmanas*, but not half as wholesome as Tulsidas.

But horoscopes, no matter how unreliable, are a comfort in turbulent times. Many democracies, including India, are seasick with turbulence as the foundations of the old order crumble, long-established relations fray, authority gives way to power and it looks like strongmen will rule, and what the people think no longer matters.

There are pleasant surprises, too, in the current turmoil. The rise of China has demolished the Cold-War-era claim that democracy is essential for prosperity and growth. In Italy, a prime minister with a political heritage of neo-fascism is delivering a stable working government.

And West Bengal, which has a dreadful history of electoral violence, saw almost none in the polls that ended this week. Political thugs—who are retained by every party—were said to be intimidated by the presence of reserve police and paramilitaries which have been imported into the state in strength. But so were ordinary voters.

Security forces deployed in West Bengal for the polls number about 10 times the volume of forces sent to violence-torn Manipur. They bear weapons and use vehicles designed for combating insurgency and terrorism, and to protect sensitive installations from military assault. The National Investigation Agency, the apex counter-terrorism body created after the 26/11 attacks, was also sent to West Bengal. What does an election have to do with terrorism? And why keep the forces in the state for two months—well after a new government is formed?

Actually, while there was little physical violence, unspeakable violence was done to democracy by the State and its institutions. The heavy deployment of forces produced an air of menace which will not go away, and greater violence than the summary disenfranchisement of at least 27 lakh voters is unimaginable.

Elections were held in four states and a Union territory, but the focus was on West Bengal, which the BJP sees as the jewel in the crown. To the nation, its campaign demonstrated the State power it can roll out against political opponents—including encounter specialists threatening families of Trinamool Congress candidates in the dead of night and jawans ready to lathi-charge women standing in line to vote. They conducted what looked like flag marches—the show of strength used to overawe rioting populations. There is no riot in West Bengal, but every wing of defence has been called out except the Navy and Air Force.

AFP

> In India and many other democracies, there is a growing sense of loss of agency among the masses. They suspect that the decisions which matter are being taken elsewhere, by other people, behind closed doors. The rise of China has demolished the Cold War era's claim that democracy is essential for prosperity

It's no coincidence that in the local body elections in Gujarat on April 26, the ruling party was declared uncontested winners in 730 seats—after opponents withdrew nominations *en masse*. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel is reported to have said that the objective is a condition in which opponents do not file nominations at all. That means one-party rule, like in North Korea. One nation, one election, one foregone conclusion. If that's the target, militarisation of the election landscape could be seen in other states, too.

Deep uneasiness has been voiced about the invasion of West Bengal, but there is a positive uproar about the surgical strike conducted by the commandeered Election Commission on 91 lakh voters—with a disproportionately high number of Muslims—without leaving time for an appeals process. In elections past, re-polls have been ordered for discrepancies concerning votes in four figures, but here's a discrepancy in close to seven figures. Then, there are the menacing speeches and flouting of the model code of conduct which the Election Commission has not objected to.

This combination of a disregard for the rules of decency in public life, and the ease with which institutions are being commandeered, is eating away at faith in democracy everywhere. After the Cold War era, international public assertion against warfare has been visible ever since the invasion of Iraq, when millions came out on the streets in many nations—to little or no effect.

Public sentiment has had almost nothing say in the project to turn Gaza into prime real estate. But it has had some success domestically in the US, where huge demonstrations over the span of a year have discouraged the militarisation of everyday life—something like what West Bengal is experiencing now.

Whether in India or any other important democracy, there is a growing sense of a loss of agency among the masses, a suspicion that the decisions which matter to society are being taken elsewhere, by other people, behind closed doors. Even the most significant decision—figuring out who gets to run governments.

This could lead to a dangerous loss of confidence in democracy, which needs a more uplifting horoscope soon. In the meantime, there's poll paraphernalia.

(Views are personal)
(Tweets @pratik_k)

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SPEAKEASY

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Oil shocks

Ref: *UAE's exit from Opec* (May 1). The UAE has made it crystal clear that it seeks to free itself from production constraints posed by the Hormuz Strait blockade. India may initially feel a double whammy as supply may take another big hit. The sooner we diversify sources the better.
Haribandhu Panigrahi, Subarnapur

Grassroot democracy

Ref: *Southern panchayats show the way* (May 1). Southern states have shown consistent success in rural governance through education, health and welfare. Their focus on decentralised planning and accountability has strengthened grassroots democracy. Northern states must learn from these models to ensure collective growth. True progress begins in empowered villages.
Babu Crishna, Bengaluru

Nurturing avarice

Ref: *Campus as a crucible* (May 1). The veteran MP speaks volumes on the probable outcomes. Campuses are being polluted by political leaders, not student representatives. Autonomous stands have been long lost and what remains is manufacturing units of greedy and avaricious politicians of tomorrow.
Ramalingeswara Rao, email

China caution

Ref: *Nod for China FDI* (May 1). India has been vacillating for long about expanding economic engagement with China despite its attractive proposals. Though safety-first mindset is essential, India's present attempts to align its precautionary approach with growth imperatives are heartening.
Rajarao Kumar, email

Missing pulse

Ref: *Exit polls predict tough fight* (May 1). Exit poll euphoria should be taken with a pinch of salt. These numbers are estimates and don't necessarily reflect the ground reality. In a democracy as vast and complex as India's, data can capture the noise, but often misses the pulse.
Adrian David, Chennai

Iran stalemate

Ref: *No compromise* (May 1). Iran has ruled out any compromise on its nuclear and missile capabilities and maintained its grip over the Hormuz Strait, even as Donald Trump is pushing to curb its ambitions. This has left the situation tense and uncertain. The key question that still remains: will Trump retreat or escalate further?
P V Prakash, Mumbai

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POSTS OF THE DAY

Akhilesh Yadav @yadavakhilesh
Cylinders don't get expensive; the roti-thali does. This is known only by the one who buys and eats it themselves, not by the one who goes and eats at others' plates

Prakash Ambedkar @Prksh_Ambedkar
The Indian Buddhist Mahasabha and the Bahujan Mukti Morcha are fighting for the liberation of the Mahabodhi Mahavihara and will continue to fight

Sambit Patra @sambitswaraj
The strength of New India lies in our worker brothers and sisters, who are making an extraordinary contribution to building a developed and self-reliant India.

Oppn demands rollback of LPG hike

Cong, DMK, SP and Left slam govt, with LoP Rahul Gandhi calling the raise an 'election bill'

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE Opposition, including Congress, DMK, SP, and the Left parties, attacked the Narendra Modi government over the hike in the price of commercial LPG cylinders, with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi saying this is an "election bill" and the next "strike" will be on petrol and diesel.

The price of commercial LPG was hiked by the steepest ever ₹993 per 19-kg cylinder on Friday, marking the third straight monthly increase due to rising global energy prices linked to the West Asia conflict.

Gandhi said he had warned that the heat of inflation would strike after the elections. "Today, commercial gas cylinders have become ₹993 more expensive. This marks the largest single-day hike. This is an election bill," Gandhi posted on X.

"Since February: A hike of ₹1,380, an 81% increase in just three months. Tea stalls, 'dhabas', hotels, bakeries, sweet shops—the burden on every kitchen has increased. And this will impact your plate as well," Gandhi said. The first strike was on gas; the next will be on petrol and diesel, he added.

The Congress also said the ruling party's regard for the common Indians' suffering is limited to election gimmicks, after which they are left to their own devices.

Echoing the criticism, SP president Akhilesh Yadav slammed the BJP, saying it would make food expensive for the common people.

A 19-kg commercial LPG—used by establishments such as hotels and restaurants—now costs a record ₹3,071.5 in Delhi, up from ₹2,078.50 previously.

"Cylinders don't get expensive; the roti-thali does. This is known only by the one who buys and eats it themselves, not by the one who goes and eats at others' places or steals from others' plates," Yadav said. "If they had to make the cylinder expensive, they should have just made it ₹1,000 more expensive outright. Who are these BJP folks doing a favour to by not hiking the price by ₹1,000 but just ₹7 short of it," the former CM said sarcastically.

The Lok Sabha MP also asked when the BJP will bring a censure motion on "inflation, unemployment, and recession".

Meanwhile, calling for the protection of people's livelihoods, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin demanded an immediate rollback of the LPG price hike. In his social media X platform, he alleged that, as predicted before the polls, the BJP-led government has raised LPG prices immediately after the elections concluded. "When global crude oil prices fell, the benefits were not passed on to the people," he said, accusing the Centre of "using the West Asia war crisis as an excuse to raise the prices without regard for public welfare".

Urging for rollback of the hike, CPI Rajya Sabha MP Sandosh Kumar said, "Instead of ensuring stability in fuel supplies and prices, this approach has left the country exposed, and the burden is now being dumped on restaurants, dhabas, small eateries, hostels, PG accommodations, and small establishments across the country. The immediate fallout will be higher food costs and living expenses, hitting ordinary people the hardest."

THIRD STRAIGHT MONTHLY INCREASE

The price of commercial LPG was hiked by the steepest ever ₹993 per 19-kg cylinder on Friday, marking the third straight monthly increase due to rising global energy prices linked to the West Asia conflict.

Cocaine seized, Shah says will crush narco cartels

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reiterated the government's resolve to dismantle narcotics networks after a major drug seizure in Mumbai exposed an international trafficking syndicate.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) confiscated 349 kilograms of high-grade cocaine valued at approximately ₹1,745 crore, marking one of the largest operations in recent times, officials said.

Describing the action as a significant breakthrough, the Home Minister said the government remained committed to "ruthlessly crushing" drug cartels. He highlighted that the NCB's success reflects a "bottom-to-top" investigative approach, tracing smaller consignments to uncover larger networks. Shah also commended the NCB for a "monumental success" in combating organised narcotics crime.

In a parallel development, the NCB, with Indian and international agencies, secured the return of global drug peddler Mohammed Salim Dola from Turkiye under "Operation Global-Hunt." He was apprehended at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on Friday. According to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Dola, a 59-year-old Mumbai native, had evaded law enforcement for years. An INTERPOL Red Notice was issued against him in March 2024. He is wanted in multiple narcotics cases across the country.

Investigations show Dola ran a network across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. His criminal history of two decades, includes heroin trafficking, charas, mephedrone, mandrax, and methamphetamine in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

We are resolved to ruthlessly crush the narcotics cartel. The Narcotics Bureau has cracked down on a major international narcotics ring seizing 349 kgs of high-grade cocaine worth ₹1,745 crore in Mumbai.
Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

'Transformation of Ladakh after 2019 immense'

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday inaugurated the relics exposition of Tathagata Buddha and the 2569th Buddha Purnima celebrations in Ladakh, and said that creation of Union Territory of Ladakh was a long pending demand of the locals and that the region has since emerged as a powerful model of transformation, after decades of neglect and stalled development.

This is the first time that the sacred relics have been taken out from their permanent location for an exhibition within the country.

During the visit, Shah virtually laid the foundation stone of a 10,000-litre-per-day dairy plant in Kargil at an estimated cost of ₹25 crore and launched several dairy development initiatives, aimed at boosting self-reliance in the UT. "We want this border UT to become an Atma Nirbhar," Shah said.

Centre tightens OCI norms, expands grounds for cancellation of status

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026, introducing significant changes to the existing Citizenship Rules, 2009, with a focus on streamlining procedures for Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) services and strengthening regulatory oversight.

Under the revised rules, OCI applications will now be mandatorily submitted through an online system, replacing the earlier hybrid processes. The government has also introduced provisions for both physical OCI cards and electronic OCI (e-OCI) documentation, aimed at improving accessibility and administrative efficiency.

Additionally, the updated framework also clarifies that minors are not permitted to hold both Indian and foreign passports simultaneously, reinforcing compliance with existing citizenship norms.

The OCI cards continue to grant multiple-entry, multipurpose lifelong visas to persons of Indian origin and their spouses. Cardholders are entitled to certain economic and educational benefits in India, making the scheme an important link for the global Indian diaspora.

However, the government has reiterated that OCI status does not equate to full citizenship and does not confer political rights such as voting, contesting elections, or holding constitutional offices.

Emphasising the conditional nature of the scheme, the MHA in the notification stated that the OCI status remains a privilege rather than an entitlement, and authorities retain the power to revoke the same if a holder is found to be in violation of Indian laws or regulations.

The OCI scheme was originally introduced in 2005 through an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Relief for Khera in Himanta's wife passport row, gets anticipatory bail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court has granted Congress leader Pawan Khera anticipatory bail in connection with the FIR registered by Assam Police on the complaint by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, over his allegation that she held multiple passports and property abroad. Thursday's order of the SC was uploaded on its website on Friday.

The Gauhati High Court had on April 24 rejected Khera's plea for anticipatory bail, following which, Khera moved SC.

The two-judge bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and AS Chandurkar said: "Observations made by the HC in the impugned order are not based on correct appreciation of all the material which has been placed on record and appear to be erroneous, in particular shifting the burden on the accused."

The court also directed Khera to be released on anticipatory bail in the event of his arrest in Crime Branch Police station in Case No. 04/2026 and on such reasonable terms and conditions as deemed fit.

Khera must cooperate in the investigation and appear before the police station as and when required and intimated; he will not influence or tamper with any evidence during the pendency of the investigation or trial; he shall not leave India without prior leave of the competent Court.

The court clarified that the grant of bail is unrelated to the merits of the criminal case. The bench said. "We are cognizant of the fact that personal liberty of an individual enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution cannot be put to jeopardy lightly." The decision triggered a war of words between the Congress and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, with the former urging Him to reflect on his "deeply inappropriate" remarks, which it said lowered the standards of democratic discourse.

Welcoming the ruling, spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said it reinforces the legal principle that the "triple test" —risk of flight, tampering with evidence, or influencing witnesses—must justify any arrest.

Singhvi criticised Sarma's statements cited in the ruling as unparliamentary and unacceptable, saying they risk eroding constitutional norms. He urged those in public office to reflect, clarifying he was not seeking an apology but suggesting that expressing regret could elevate democratic standards.

Responding, Sarma said that he did not need lessons on democracy, public discourse or decency from anyone, particularly Singhvi, adding that the matter was "just the beginning, not the end".

In a post on X, Sarma said, "This concerns a woman with no role in politics whose character was targeted on national television using purportedly forged documents."

CONDITIONAL ACT

1. Must cooperate in probe and appear before police as and when required
2. Not influence or tamper with any evidence
3. Not leave India without prior leave of the competent ccourt.

'LCA man' Ravi Kota takes charge as HAL chief, will oversee Tejas programme

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

STATE-OWNED Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Friday appointed Ravi Kota, known as "LCA man" for his long association with the Tejas programme, as its 22nd Chairman and Managing Director from May 1 following the retirement of Dr DK Sunil.

Kota was selected by the Public Enterprises Selection Board from a pool of eight candidates, including six internal HAL executives, before getting the Cabinet nod.

A mechanical engineering graduate with management training from IIM-Ahmedabad and IAS Toulouse in France, Kota brings more than three decades of experience within HAL's manufacturing and corporate structure.

He is known within defence and aerospace circles for his long association with the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme. Earlier, Kota served as general manager of HAL's LCA division, where he was involved in production planning, programme execution and the operationalisation of the Tejas fleet for the IAF.

Kota was also associated with HAL's execution of the 83-aircraft Tejas Mk1A contract signed in 2021, one of India's largest indigenous military aviation orders, and was involved in efforts to expand production capacity, increase private-sector participation and strengthen supply-chain integration.

However, HAL is yet to complete delivery of the IAF's original 40-aircraft Tejas Mk1 order, with two Final Operational Clearance-standard trainer aircraft still pending. At the same time, while five Tejas Mk1A aircraft are ready, deliveries have been delayed as the aircraft are yet to fully meet the IAF's Air Staff Qualitative Requirements (ASQRs). Kota takes charge at a time when HAL's order book exceeds ₹1 lakh crore, with the company under pressure to improve production efficiency.

Single-window clearance system set up for swift approvals to live events

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE government has set up a single-window clearance system for swift approvals to promote concert economy as one of the key drivers of growth. To promote the sector, the information and broadcasting (I&B) ministry established a Live Events Development Cell (LEDC) in July last year.

"A single-window clearance system for live event permissions has been developed on the India Cine Hub (ICH) portal. The adoption of the ICH portal by states will help digitise the live event permissions process, and ensure timely, transparent, and efficient approvals," said a ministry official after the cell's review meeting held on Thursday. I&B secretary Chanchal Kumar chaired the meeting, which was attended by representatives from nine central ministries, six states, and 12 industry members.

The LEDC discussed the draft concept note on "greenfield venue development" & skilling initiatives for the live events segment. It was informed that the IIMC, in collaboration with the Media and Entertainment Skills Council and Event and Entertainment Management Association, will soon introduce certificate courses in live events.

"LEDC aims to position the concert economy as one of the key drivers of national growth and make India a global hub for live events by 2030 and generate 15-20 additional million jobs in this sector. The sector is projected to grow at 10 per cent to ₹196 billion by 2028," said an official. Kumar said, "On behalf of the government, both Centre and state, I assure that all necessary facilitation will be extended to make the processes for organising live events robust and transparent."

Gowariker named festival director for 57th IFFI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

FILMMAKER Ashutosh Gowariker has been appointed the director of the 57th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting announced on Friday.

Departing from the practice of nominating a senior government official to the post, the ministry assigned the charge of the festival to producer-director Shekhar Kapur in 2024.

Gowariker is an acclaimed filmmaker with a contribution to Indian cinema. His association with IFFI spans several decades, reflecting his deep engagement with the evolution of cinematic arts and international film culture.

He is known for Hindi blockbusters such as 'Lagaan', 'Swades' and 'Jodhaa Akbar'. Gowarikar's first film as a director was 'Pehla Nasha'.

Pilot body writes to DGCA over cockpit crew rest

- The Airline Pilots Association of India (ALPA India) has insisted that airlines not be allowed to penalise pilots for seeking exemption from flying due to exhaustion

'Adhere to duty time norms'

Association says the court-mandated Flight Duty Time Limitations framework should be followed. Grant of variations to operators has diluted the intent of the regulations

- Variations defeat purpose of fatigue management framework, perpetuate scheduling practices that operate at regulatory limits
- Dilution of weekly rest has impact on fatigue and health outcomes. This is not only a welfare issue but a safety parameter
- Pilot Arjun Naidu died in Bengaluru on April 30 & Tarundeep Singh died in Bali on April 29

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

AFTER the death of two pilots this week, a pilot association has written to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Civil Aviation Ministry, demanding full implementation of the court-mandated weekly rest period for the cockpit crew by airlines. The Airline Pilots Association of India (ALPA India) has insisted that airlines not be allowed to penalise pilots for seeking exemption from flying due to exhaustion.

Akasa Air pilot Captain Arjun Naidu, 44, died in Bengaluru on April 30 due to heart attack he suffered during a ground training session. Captain Tarundeep Singh, an Air India pilot in his forties, also died due to heart attack in Bali on April 29 during the crew rest period after flying.

"These issues arise in the context of the court-mandated Flight Duty Time Limitations framework and the continued deferment of its full implementation. It is submitted that continued grant of variations to operators has materially diluted the intent of FDTL regulations," ALPA India president Captain Sam Thomas said.

These variations, originally conceived as transitional measures, have become the norm, the association said. "This defeats the purpose of fatigue management framework and perpetuates scheduling practices that operate at or near regulatory limits without adequate safety buffers," it added.

Captain Thomas said, "The absence or dilution of meaningful weekly rest has a cumulative impact on fatigue and long-term health outcomes. This is not merely a welfare issue but a core safety parameter. The untimely death of pilots recently speaks volumes."

ALPA India has urged DGCA to initiate a time-bound programme for the withdrawal of such variations, culminating in the uniform implementation of FDTL provisions across operators. "A clearly articulated roadmap, with defined end of variations, would provide both regulatory certainty and operational clarity," Captain Thomas added. It is imperative that the provisions disallowing leave to be substituted in place of weekly rest be reinstated gradually, the body said.

The association urged DGCA to ensure that airlines are mandated to submit quarterly fatigue report data which must be published on the regulator's website. As the inquiry report of the IndiGo disruption of December 2025 has not been made available, ALPA India pointed out, "The withholding of such a report raises concerns."

AI to cut int'l flights till July amid fuel price surge

Air India will reduce its international flights till July as airspace curbs and surge in jet fuel prices have made many routes unprofitable, CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson said on Friday. "We have reduced some flying for April and May...massive rise in jet fuel prices which, together with airspace closures and longer flying routes, have caused many of our international flights to become unprofitable to operate," he said.

ADVERSITY

Sarah Moin of Lucknow, visually and hearing impaired, has turned adversity into academic brilliance, securing 98.75 per cent marks (best of four subjects) in the ISC Class 12 examinations.

1 HELD FOR BURGLARY IN BEED OF MAHARASHTRA

INDIA	Max	Min		Max	Min
Ahmedabad	43	28	Mumbai	34	27
Bhopal	41	27	Panaji	35	26
Jaipur	40	26	Patna	36	25
Amritsar	36	22	Lucknow	38	26
Chennai	35	28	Port Blair	31	27
Kolkata	34	26	Imphal	28	21
Srinagar	20	07	Chandigarh	37	25

EC move comes following allegations of EVM tampering in 4 booths in Abhishek stronghold

Repoll in 15 South Bengal booths

SUBHENDU MAITI @ Kolkata

A day after the Special Roll Observer (SRO) submitted his report following an on-the-spot visit to Diamond Harbour in South 24-Parganas district of West Bengal, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday ordered a repoll at 11 polling booths in Magrahat Paschim Assembly constituency and four booths in Diamond Harbour Assembly constituency. The repoll will be held on Saturday, May 2, from 7 am to 6 pm.

Polling in these constituencies took place during the second and final phase of elections on April 29,

The order, issued by Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal, added, "I am further to state that the widest possible publicity should be given by beating of drums in the polling area, and contesting candidates should be informed in writing about the fresh poll being taken on the said date."

An EC team led by SRO Dr Subrata Gupta, in charge of West Bengal, made an on-the-spot visit to Diamond Harbour on Thursday to review demands for repolling in around 77 polling booths under four assembly constituencies. The Commission had received 32 complaints from Falta, 29 from Diamond Harbour, 13 from Magrahat, and three from Budge Budge. Besides Magrahat, the remaining booths fall under Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee's Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency. Magrahat falls under the Joynagar Lok Sabha seat.

Officials said complaints include allegations of EVM tampering, use of substances on machines, and attempts to obstruct surveillance cameras.

The EC, keeping in view past allegations of rigging in Diamond Harbour, is actively examining demands for repolling in 77 booths across four Assembly seats, sources said.

Acting on the reports, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar directed Gupta to carry out on-ground inspections before any decision on further repolling is finalised, an official said.

Gupta is currently conducting inspections to assess the situation in several booths and is also holding discussions with other observers, the official added.

A particularly serious allegation was reported from Magrahat Paschim in the Diamond Harbour area, where it was claimed that spy cameras were placed in voters' shirt pockets to track their voting choices. "The instructions are clear. Assess everything at the ground level before taking a call," another official said.

Security personnel standing guard outside a strong room in Kolkata on Friday | PTI

EC move day after visit to South 24-Parganas dist

The Special Roll Observer had submitted a report after a visit to Diamond Harbour in South 24-Parganas district on Thursday. Among the 15 booths where repolling has been ordered, 11 fall in Magrahat Paschim and four in Diamond Harbour Assembly constituencies. The repoll will be held on Saturday from 7 am to 6 pm.

Top poll official says malpractice claims baseless

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

DISMISSING allegations of suspicious activities at several counting centres, the West Bengal chief electoral officer (CEO), Manoj Agarwal, on Friday said there is "no scope for wrongdoing" at the centres where round-the-clock CCTV monitoring of strong rooms is in place.

The CEO made this assertion following allegations by the ruling Trinamool Congress, even as party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee appealed to party workers to guard strong rooms across the state where EVMs are kept after the two-phase elections in 294 assembly constituencies held on April 23 and 29.

TMC spokesperson and Beleghata constituency candidate Kunal Ghosh said party workers and poll aspirants were maintaining vigil at counting centres storing EVMs, as directed by the party leadership.

"There is no scope for any wrongdoing given the arrangements made," Agarwal told reporters on Friday. He added that CCTV monitoring of strong rooms is continuous, and that people can watch the monitors from outside.

HC invokes Ramayana to deny daughter's custody to Canada-based father

Despite Ram being the king of Ayodhya and their father, the children remain with the mother, emphasising: emotional security, and maternal guardianship

MP HC Bench

Child's welfare paramount

Observing that a child's welfare is paramount, the MP HC cited an SC order and stated, "The existence of a foreign court order is only one of the factors. The welfare of the child remains paramount."

ANURAAG SINGH @ Bhopal

CITING references from Valmiki Ramayana, a bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in Indore has refused to send a 10-year-old girl to Canada to join her father.

While dismissing a habeas corpus petition filed by the girl's father, the MP HC's Indore's double judge bench of Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Binod Kumar Dwivedi quoted the Sanskrit verse "Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi" (Mother and motherland are greater than heaven) to underscore the significance of the maternal bond and the child's connection to her current environment.

The petitioner had sought an order to send the girl to Canada and hand over custody to him as per an order passed by the Family Court of the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario (Canada).

Notably, the girl's parents were married in Maharashtra in 2014 and subsequently moved to the United States. The daughter was born in Chicago in 2016 and received US citizenship by birth before they moved to Toronto, Canada.

The woman came to India with her daughter in January 2022 and, instead of returning, enrolled the child in a school in Indore. This led to a dispute between the couple, with the husband demanding that the child be sent back to Canada.

Following the breakdown of the relationship, the father obtained a custody order from the Family Court of the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario. Seeking to enforce this order, he filed a habeas corpus petition before the Indore bench of the MP High Court, demanding the girl be handed over to him and repatriated to Canada.

The respondent to the habeas corpus petition (the girl's mother) maintained that the child's welfare was best served in her current environment in Indore. The MP HC observed that a child's welfare is paramount, while citing a Supreme Court order.

GUWAHATI DIARY

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR
Our correspondent in Guwahati
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Field day for NCC cadets at Umiam Lake

Army and Air Wing NCC cadets from Assam have come together at the first-of-its-kind ten-day 'Aqua Adventure Regatta' where they are given structured training in water-based adventure activities at the Umiam Lake in Meghalaya. For many cadets, this is their first exposure to boating and water sports. The NCC Guwahati Group launched the April 24-May 3 camp for 100 NCC cadets under the aegis of NCC North Eastern Region Directorate. "The regatta has been conceptualised to instill courage, discipline, teamwork and water confidence among the cadets, while also nurturing young talent for future adventure," a defence ministry statement said.

Bar licence suspended after road mishap

Authorities suspended the licence of a Guwahati bar-cum-restaurant, D Tipsy Gaon (EXORO), after a road mishap claimed the lives of three young women—two professionals and an engineering student. Probe revealed that victims, accompanied by a man who survived in the accident, had visited the bar on the night of April 26, consumed liquor and left the place at 3 am. The bar's licence allows it to serve liquor on the premises till 12.30 am. Kamrup (Metro) district authorities ordered a probe which will be conducted by the district superintendent of excise. Shamim Ahmed, the lone survivor, allegedly went underground after the accident but police arrested him.

Students get lessons on wildlife conservation

Sixty students from two high schools located close to Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Morigaon district took part in a day-long wildlife conservation awareness workshop-cum-interaction on the ecological importance of rhinos and the role common people can play in the conservation of the animal and its habitats. The Rhino Research Conservation Division of biodiversity organisation Aaranyak and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary authority organised the workshop with support from Zoo Berlin. "Various sessions conducted, were designed to inculcate a sense of belonging to nature that sustains the animal kingdom," Aaranyak said.

'Cleric' accused of molestation hurt in encounter

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A 45-year-old 'cleric', accused of molesting a burqa-clad woman in a deserted lane in Moradabad, was shot in the leg during an encounter with Moradabad police. Turning out to be a ladies' tailor, the cleric sustained a bullet injury in his left leg.

As per police sources, the encounter took place near Jama Masjid around 11 pm on Thursday. The police authorities said that on being surrounded by the cops, the accused opened fire. In retaliatory firing, a bullet hit his left leg and he is currently undergoing treatment at the district hospital.

Two days ago, Naushad allegedly followed the woman in a deserted lane and molested her. When she screamed, the accused fled. As the victim reported the matter to the local police, on Thursday, Naushad was identified through the scanning of CCTV footage of the lane. Five police teams were deployed to trace him.

According to SP City Ran Vijay Singh, Naushad is unmarried. Investigation has revealed that he had allegedly behaved indecently with several women in the past as well.

Three workers trapped after under-construction bridge in Jammu caves in

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

A portion of an under-construction bridge in the Bantalab area of Jammu collapsed on Friday, trapping four labourers. While one of the trapped labourers was rescued, three others, including two from Chhattisgarh and one from Bihar, are still trapped under the debris. The rescue operation is continuing in full swing.

The incident took place around 3.30 pm when the labourers were working under the bridge. The workers were carrying out repair work on a retaining wall near the bridge damaged in last year's flash floods. "Six workers were working at the site and were trapped under the debris after the bridge collapse," a worker said.Two labourers managed to escape, while four others remained trapped in the massive debris.

The NDRF and SDRF personnel, along with civil volunteers, police, CRPF and army personnel, launched rescue operations to extricate those buried under the debris. The JCBs and other earth-moving machinery were pressed into service to rescue the trapped labourers.

Incident during repair work

The incident took place around 3.30 pm when the labourers were working under the bridge. The workers were carrying out repair work on a retaining wall near the bridge damaged in last year's flash floods. Two labourers managed to escape, while four others remained trapped.

During the rescue operation, the teams managed to rescue one of the labourers and shifted the rescued worker to hospital for treatment.

An official said the rescue operation is on and more personnel and machinery are being moved to the area to increase the pace of the rescue operation.

Boat tragedy toll 9; mother found holding son in death

ANURAAG SINGH @ Bhopal

AS rescuers on Friday recovered five more bodies from Bargi Dam in Jabalpur, where a cruise boat capsized, taking the toll to nine, they found bodies of a mother clutching her four-year-old son to her chest in a desperate attempt to save him.

"When we started pulling out the woman, we were unable to get her out. We found that she had clung on to her son tightly. We have never seen such a heart-wrenching scene in rescue operations we have conducted in the past," said the head of a diving team from Agra that was pressed into action.

While 29 tourists were rescued, teams from the Army, NDRF and SDRF intensified search for six still missing. The MP government ordered a probe into the tragedy that raised questions about safety lapses.

The deceased woman and her son were identified as 39-year-old Merina Massey and 4-year-old Trishan Massey, residents of Delhi. Merina along with husband Pradeep and teenage daughter Siya had come to Jabalpur to be with in-laws. While Pradeep and Siya survived, his mother Madhur Massey's body was retrieved on Thursday night.

The cruise was also boarded by Khamaria Ordnance Factory staffer Kamraj and family members. While Kamraj's parents preferred staying back on the Narmada bank, Kamraj boarded the boat along with wife and two sons, besides sister-in-law. While one of the sons was rescued alive, Kamraj's wife Kakulajhi (38) was found dead. Kamraj and his five-year-old son Sritamil are missing.

Syed Riyaz Hussain from Jabalpurhad a miraculous escape. "I was stuck in one corner of the boat for around two and a half hours, with the neck being out of water. I have been saved by sheer providence, but my wife and a female relative are still missing," he said.

CM Mohan Yadav announced that the rescuers will be honoured on the Independence Day. He announced ₹4 lakh each as immediate assistance to the next of kin of nine deceased.

Public outreach to deliver services at doorsteps

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

AMID the intense summer of May, a movement to make governance more responsive begun across the villages and cities of Chhattisgarh on Friday. The Sushasan Tihar 2026 campaign, designed by the Chhattisgarh government to take the administration to the citizens' doorsteps, commenced on May 1 and will continue till June 10.

According to the government, the aim of the initiative is to ensure that citizens' grievances are resolved on the spot, for which the administrative machinery, led by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai down to district collectors, will be actively present on the ground.

Through home visits and special grievance redress camps, the administration will process applications on-site, prepare files immediately, and deliver solutions without delay. Collectors were earlier directed to prioritise the disposal of pending cases by April 30, so that the new initiative could start on a clean slate.

The campaign specifically targets revenue matters, such as mutation, partition, and demarcation, pending MGNREGA wage payments, issuance of income, caste, and domicile certificates, as well as issues pertaining to essential services, like electricity, transformers, and drinking water among others.

Government sources say a new working model will be visible at the grassroots level under this initiative. In rural areas, camps will be organised in clusters of 15–20 gram panchayats, while in urban areas, ward-based clusters will be covered. These camps will receive grievance applications from common people and ensure on-the-spot delivery of benefits to eligible beneficiaries. A maximum period of one month has been set to resolve each grievance.

A key highlight of the campaign will be the chief minister's surprise visits to these camps. He will travel to different districts, inspect development works, hold direct interactions with villagers in local gatherings, and assess their concerns. Officials say that accountability will be fixed on the spot and directions for immediate resolution will be issued. Ministers, MPs, and senior bureaucrats will regularly visit these camps, interact directly with citizens, and monitor the arrangements under the initiative. This is expected to make governance more transparent, senior officials believe.

SUSHASAN TIHAR '26

- The campaign commenced on May 1, will continue until June 10
- Through home visits admin will process applications on-site, prepare files immediately, and deliver solutions
- In rural areas, camps will be held in clusters of 15–20 gram panchayats, and in urban areas, ward-based clusters will be covered

- Ministers, MPs, MLAs, and senior bureaucrats will regularly visit and monitor arrangements
- Campaign specifically targets revenue matters such as mutation, partition, and demarcation, pending MGNREGA wage payments

Man who duped ex-DGP of Bihar threatens DM as 'ED director', held

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

A conman was arrested in Patna on Friday after he called the Bhojpur district magistrate (DM) by posing as the Director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The fraudster, Abhishek Agarwal, had hit headlines in 2022 for trying to influence the then Bihar DGP S K Singhal by impersonating the Patna High Court Chief Justice. He had been sent to jail in connection with the case and was out on bail last year.

After Abhishek Agarwal called DM Tanai Sultania on April 27, the officer got suspicious and alerted the confidential branch of his office. An FIR was registered on April 28 in Ara, the Bhojpur district headquarters. A special team was constituted to investigate the incident.

When the police conducted a technical investigation, the caller's mobile tower location was traced to Nageshwar Colony in Patna. The Bhojpur police, with the cooperation of the STF, conducted a raid and nabbed Agarwal.

According to police, Agarwal used to call senior bureaucrats while posing as a senior officer of either Central and state probe agency. "We are trying to gather information about his involvement in duping state government officers in recent past," a police officer told this reporter.

In 2022, Agarwal, a tiles dealer, had called then DGP S K Singhal impersonating then HC Chief Justice Sanjay Karol. He had attempted to exert pressure to dilute a case involving former Gaya SSP Aditya Kumar. Acting on Singhal's orders, Economic Offences Unit (EOU) registered an FIR against the SSP in Patna.

Aditya Kumar was suspended after the matter came to light that Agarwal was exerting pressure on then DGP in favour of the SSP. The investigation has revealed that Agarwal had connections with IAS and IPS officers in Bihar. Photographs of him with these officers also surfaced.

Past attempts to deceive

In 2022, Agarwal, a tiles dealer, had called then DGP S K Singhal impersonating then HC Chief Justice Sanjay Karol. He had attempted to exert pressure to dilute a case involving former Gaya SSP Aditya Kumar.

49-year-old
woman charged over freak car crash that killed Indian-origin schoolgirl in London

GLOBAL WEATHER
LR: Light Rain • HR: Heavy Rain • LS: Light Snow • TDS: Thundershower • LC: Light Cloud • SNY: Sunny

Beijing	21	1	SNY	Los Angeles	20	12	SNY
Colombo	28	24	SNY	Melbourne	26	15	LC
Dhaka	31	19	SNY	Moscow	4	2	SNY
Dubai	26	21	SNY	New York	7	2	SNY
Houston	31	19	TDS	Singapore	28	25	TDS
Istanbul	33	21	SNY	Toronto	1	-5	SNY
London	13	9	SNY	Washington	3	-2	SNY

Trump says not satisfied with latest Iranian proposal

White House threatens to slap sanctions on ships paying toll to Iranian authorities for safe passage through Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he was "not satisfied" with a new Iranian negotiating proposal, with peace talks between the two sides frozen despite a weeks-long ceasefire.

Iranian negotiators delivered the text of the proposal to mediator Pakistan on Thursday evening, the IRNA news agency reported, without offering details as to its contents.

"At this moment I'm not satisfied with what they're offering," Trump told reporters, laying blame for the stalled talks with Iran due to "tremendous discord" within its leadership.

"Do we want to go and just blast the hell out of them and finish them forever—or do we want to try and make a deal? I mean, those are the options," he said when asked about next steps, adding he would "prefer not" to take the first option "on a human basis".

The war, launched by the United States and Israel with a wave of surprise strikes on February 28, has been on hold since April 8, but only one failed round of direct talks has taken place between Iranian and US representatives.

In the meantime, Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off vast amounts of oil, gas and fertiliser from the world economy, while the US has imposed a counterblockade on Iranian ports.

Bulk carriers, cargo ships, and service vessels line the horizon in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas on Friday | AFP

Despite the failure to negotiate an end to the war, the ceasefire has held. On Friday, judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said "the Islamic Republic has never shied away from negotiations".

The White House has declined to comment on the details of the new Iranian proposal.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is arguing that the war in Iran has already ended because of the ceasefire that began in early April, an interpretation that would allow the White House to avoid the need to seek congressional approval.

A senior administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the administration's position, said for purposes of that law, "the hostilities that began on Saturday, Feb 28 have terminated." The official said the US military and Iran have not exchanged fire since the two-week ceasefire that began April 7.

In other related developments, the US imposed sanctions on a Chinese oil terminal as part of a slew of new measures on Iran, as it warned of repercussions for ships paying "tolls" demanded by Tehran.

The new measures come just two weeks before Trump visits China, a key customer for Iran's oil. President Trump's first term has unilaterally sought to stop all other countries from buying oil from Iran. *Agencies*

WAR WATCH

Trump says will raise tariffs on EU cars and trucks to 25%

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will increase the tariffs charged on cars and trucks from the European Union next week to 25%, a move that could jolt the world economy at a fragile moment.

Trump said in a social media post that the EU "is not complying with our fully agreed to Trade Deal," though he did not flesh out his objections.

Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had agreed to the trade deal last July. It set a tariff ceiling of 15% on most goods, though the Supreme Court this year ruled against the legal authority that Trump had used to charge that tax.

This left Trump looking for substitute authorities, and his administration has imposed a 10% tax while investigating trade imbalances and national security issues to put in new tariffs to make up for lost revenues.

The tariffs hit at a moment when the Iran war has crushed the world economy with expectations of slower growth and higher inflation, as oil and natural gas prices have risen due to the effective closure of the critical Strait of Hormuz.

Both the US and the EU had previously confirmed their commitment to preserving the trade framework, known as the Turnberry Agreement. The status of the 2025 deal was first cast into doubt after the Supreme Court this year ruled that the president lacked the legal authority to declare an economic emergency and charge tariffs on goods from the members of the EU and other states. *AP*

Israel holds 2 activists from the Gaza-bound flotilla for questioning

CRETE

ISRAELI authorities said Friday they were taking two high-profile activists who led an aid flotilla bound for Gaza, and who were captured by Israel in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea, to Israel for questioning. The governments of Spain and Brazil accused Israel of "kidnapping" its citizens.

The activists, Spanish-Swedish citizen of Palestinian origin Saif Abukeshek and Brazilian citizen Thiago Ávila, were among dozens of activists intercepted by the Israeli navy off the coast of Crete. They are members of the Global Sumud Flotilla's steering committee, whose mission was to break Israel's naval blockade and bring some humanitarian aid to the Palestinian territory.

In all, 22 boats and 175 activists were intercepted by the Israeli navy. Activists said Israeli forces stormed their vessels, smashed engines and detained some of those onboard. Israeli officials said they needed to take early action against the flotilla before it reached Israeli waters because of the high number of boats.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry said Friday on X that it was taking the two activists to Israel for questioning, and that

Saif Abukeshek and Thiago Ávila

Abukeshek was "suspected of affiliation with a terrorist organization" and Ávila was "suspected of illegal activity," without providing evidence.

In a joint statement, the governments of Brazil and Spain condemned "the kidnapping of two of their citizens in international waters by the Government of Israel." Unlike other flotilla participants who were disembarked in Crete, the Spanish and Brazilian activists remained detained aboard an Israeli navy ship.

"This flagrantly illegal action by the Israeli authorities outside their jurisdiction constitutes a violation of International Law, which may be invoked before international courts, and may constitute a crime in our respective national jurisdictions," the statement added. *AFP*

America pulls its largest warship USS Gerald Ford from West Asia

WASHINGTON

The USS Gerald R Ford aircraft carrier has left the West Asia after taking part in operations against Iran, a US official said Friday, leaving two of the massive US warships.

The Ford is currently in the US European Command area of responsibility, according to the official, who put the number of remaining US Navy ships in the West Asia at 20, including the USS Abraham Lincoln and USS George H W Bush aircraft carriers.

The Ford has been at sea for more than 10 months—a deployment that has already seen it take part in US operations in the Caribbean, where Washington's forces have carried out strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats, interdicted sanctioned tankers and seized Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro.

A fire broke out in a laundry room aboard the carrier on March 12, injuring two sailors and causing major damage to some 100 beds, according to the US military.

The carrier has also reportedly suffered significant problems with its toilet system while at sea, with US media reporting clogs and long lines for restrooms on the ship. *AFP*

Clashes erupt in Australia town over murder of 5-year-old indigenous girl

SYDNEY

AN angry crowd clashed with Australian police outside a hospital treating the suspected killer of a five-year-old Indigenous girl in the outback town of Alice Springs.

Images on local media Friday showed teargas in the air, a police van in flames and crowds yelling at armed officers keeping people at bay during the overnight confrontation.

The violence followed the discovery Thursday of a body south of Alice Springs believed to be that of the little girl, referred to at her family's request as Kumanjayi Little Baby.

She had disappeared from an Indigenous community camp called Old Timers late on Saturday night, sparking a vast, days-long search on foot, horseback, and by helicopter that gripped much of the country.

Police said a formal autopsy would be held on the child's body, which was found about five kilometres (three miles) from the camp.

Hours after her body was found, police announced they had arrested the suspect, Jefferson Lewis.

Lewis was beaten until he was unconscious after turning himself in to Indigenous community members on Thursday evening at a camp by Alice Springs, in central Australia.

When police and emergency services intervened, they too came under attack, said Northern Territory Police Force Commissioner Martin Dole.

"At the time of his apprehension by us, he was unconscious and he was in the process of being treated by St John's Ambulance when they were set upon, as were the police," he told a news conference.

Lewis was then taken to hospital. "A large crowd gathered and tried to gain access to that hospital," the police commissioner said. *AFP*

A vehicle burns after it was set on fire by protesters in Alice Springs, Australia | AP

EXPRESS READ

Mamdani slammed over Koh-i-Noor remark

New York: New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani is facing criticism for extending a "rude" welcome to King Charles III and for failing to "set aside his obsession with colonialism" when he called for the Koh-i-Noor diamond to be returned. In stinging criticism, *The New York Post* Editorial Board called out the Democrat mayor's "rude" welcome extended to King Charles. "Of course Zohran Mamdani couldn't manage a decent welcome for the king of England: That would've required maturity, grace and humility that our mayor just doesn't have," the editorial said.

Massive blast at US home sends cops flying

New York: A massive, fiery explosion at a house in Queens sent several New York City police officers flying through the air on Thursday as they were responding to a call of a man inside armed with a knife and the smell of gas. Eight officers were treated for minor injuries—including burns and at least one head laceration—after the blast, and all of the people who were inside the building have been accounted for, though several were taken to a hospital, police said. Police body camera video of the explosion shows officers about to enter a small home in Queens before 3 am, and just as one starts to open the door, a huge blast erupts

Firefighters put out a fire in a residential building following a Russian drone attack in Mykolayiv, Ukraine on Friday | AFP

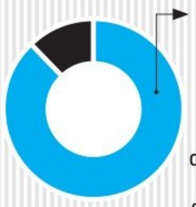
RECORD NUMBER OF DRONES FIRED AT UKRAINE

RUSSIAN FORCES FIRED A RECORD NUMBER OF LONG-RANGE ATTACK DRONES AT UKRAINE LAST MONTH, AFP ANALYSIS OF DATA PUBLISHED BY THE UKRAINIAN AIR FORCE SHOWED

6,583
long-range drones fired in April, according to a compilation of daily reports published by Ukraine's air force. That was two percent more than the number fired in March, which was also a record at the time

DAYTIME ATTACKS MORE COMMON NOW

Russia previously fired long-range drones at Ukraine almost exclusively in overnight attacks, but in recent weeks, daytime attacks have become more frequent in what analysts have called an approach designed to inflict more damage


88% of all incoming drones and missiles shot down by Ukraine

UKRAINE'S DRONE DEFENCE

Ukrainian government has touted the country's defences against drones as the best in the world, developed over four years of nightly Russian barrages of Iranian-style attack craft. Ukrainian drone interceptors have been used in the Persian Gulf region to down Iranian drones launched as part of the war in the West Asia

WAR'S TOLL Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed since Russia invaded in February 2022, including hundreds in drone and missile strikes on apartment buildings

ANTHROPIC EXCLUDED AS PENTAGON SIGNS LARGE AI DEALS

WASHINGTON

THE Pentagon on Friday announced agreements with seven leading artificial intelligence companies to deploy their technology on classified military networks, a move that pointedly excludes Anthropic amid its ongoing dispute with the Defence Department.

SpaceX, OpenAI, Google, Nvidia, Reflection, Microsoft and Amazon Web Services will be integrated into the Defense Department's most sensitive classified systems, used for mission planning, weapons targeting and other purposes.

The statement did not include Anthropic, which is caught up in a fight with the Pentagon over its demand for guardrails for how the military could use its AI tools.

The US military has been seeking to wean itself off Anthropic's AI due to the company's objection to its technology being used for mass domestic surveillance or as autonomous killing machines.

A furious Pentagon subsequently labeled the AI startup a supply-chain risk earlier this year.

Anthropic's AI model, Claude, was the only one authorized for use in classified operations within the US military and is still being used. The announcement on Friday framed the deals with Anthropic's rivals as central to the Trump administration's push to build what it called an "AI-first fighting force."

The integrations would "streamline data synthesis, elevate situational understanding, and augment warfighter decision-making," it said. *AFP*

White House against Anthropic expanding Mythos

The White House is opposing Anthropic's plans to expand access to its new artificial intelligence model Mythos to 120 companies, the Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday. President Donald Trump's administration and Anthropic had only recently started to mend ties following a dispute over the AI firm's refusal to grant the military unconditional use of its software. Anthropic has withheld the powerful Mythos model from public release citing potential cybersecurity risks and concerns it could be exploited by hackers. Instead it shared a version with selected companies including Apple, Microsoft and Nvidia under a project called "Glasswing" to help improve their security infrastructure.

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that, our client is intending to purchase the Schedule Property mentioned below from its owner viz., Rafi Ahmed, son of Abdul Khalak, residing at Flat No.B1, First Floor, "RS Mansion", Dinnur Road, R.T.Nagar, Bangalore. It is represented by the Owner that, he has acquired the Schedule Property through the registered Sale Deed dated 23.10.2003, registered as document No.8698/2003-04 in Book I and stored in CD No.44, in the Office of the Sub-Regsitrar, Anekal, Bangalore from K.M.Venkatesh, Lakshmi Vytharanee and Arun Babu, represented by their registered General Power of Attorney holder, M/s.Concorde Homes, represented by its Managing Partner R.Gopal Reddy. It is represented, further, by the Owners that, he has clear, valid and marketable title to the Schedule Property and it is free from all encumbrances.

If any person/s who claim/s any right, title or interest of any nature in or any lien, charge or enforceable right in relation to the said Schedule Property and/or any objections of any nature to the transaction should lodge such claims and/or objections in writing to the undersigned together with supporting documents within Fifteen days hereof, failing which it will be presumed that no valid claims or objections subsist and our Clients would proceed to complete the transaction with aforesaid Owner subject to compliance with other statutory and legal formalities.

Schedule Property

All the that piece and parcel of the immovable residential property bearing Site No.13, formed in Sy.No.47/3, measuring East to West 40 feet and North to South 30 feet, in all measuring 1200 sq.ft, situated at Kudlu Village, Sarjapura Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore Rural District, in the layout known as **"CONCORDE HOMES"** and bounded on the :- East :by: Private Property West :by: Road, North :by: Site bearing No.12 South :by: Site bearing No.14

Dated: 02.05.2026

Place : Bangalore. **H.D.Basappa, Advocate**
LAKSHITH LAW ASSOCIATES
"G.R.Complex", No.31, Service Road, Domlur Layout, Bangalore-560 071
E-Mail ID-basappahd2018@gmail.com
M:- 9986349626

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby put to notice that my client namely **Sri. PULLAGURA GOVARDHAN KUMAR** S/o P Ramamohan Rao intends to purchase the Schedule Property from its original owners namely **1) Smt.NARAYANAMMA K**, W/o. Late. Nagaraju, **2) Sri. VINAY KUMAR N**, S/o. Late Nagaraju, **3) Sri. KIRAN KUMAR N**, S/o. Late. Nagaraju, **4) Sri. RAKSHITH N** S/o. Late. Nagaraju, all are residing at No.12/1, Maruthi Nilaya, 2nd Cross, Near NM Super Shop, Chikkallasandra, Ramanjaneya Layout, Subramanyapura, Bengaluru- 560061.

Any person having any right, title, claim or interest in the Schedule Property must notify the undersigned with documentary proof thereof within **Fifteen (15) days** of this publication. In case no such notice is received by us within **Fifteen (15) days** from the date of publication of this notice, it shall be presumed that the title of the aforesaid owners with respect to the Schedule Property is clear, marketable and free from encumbrance/s of any kind whatsoever and no person has any right, title or interest of any nature whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Property or any part thereof. Claims or alleged interest, if any, which are not received within **Fifteen (15) days** from the date of publication of this notice shall be deemed to have been waived and disregarded for all intents and purposes and shall not be binding on my client.

SCHEDULE A PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the Agricultural Land bearing **Sy.No.4/1,** measuring **1 Acre 06 Guntas,** situated at **Ananthapura Village, Yelahanka Hobli, Bengaluru North Taluk** and bounded on: -

East : Land bearing Sy.No.4/2;
West : Remaining Portion of Sy.No.4/1;
North : Land bearing Sy.No.9;
South : Road.

G.V. Sudhakar, Advocate
No.346, New No.35, 12th Cross, 7th Main 2nd Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore -560011. Ph:9886359644

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public are hereby informed that, Mr. Kothandan.A, son of Arumugam, residing at No.66, 2nd "G" Cross, 3rd main, 3rd Block, H.R.B.R.Layout, Kamanajhalli Main Road, Bangalore-560 084 has lost the Original Gift Deed dated 30.05.2014, executed by Nageshwari Kothandan in favour of Pavithra Kirubakaran, registered as document No.BNS-1-03390/2014-15 in Book I and stored in CD No.BNSD315, in the Office of the Sub-registrar, Banaswadi, Bangalore and Deed of Cancellation of Gift Deed dated 30.08.2017, executed by Nageshwari Kothandan in favour of Pavithra Kirubakaran, registered as document No.SHV-1-03215/2017-18 in Book I and stored in CD No.SHVD256, in the Office of the Sub-Registrar, Shivajinagar, Bangalore. A police complaint dated 27.04.2026 is lodged in this regard. If any person finds the same may kindly be delivered to the undersigned or to my client. Any person un-authorisly holding the same and dealing with the same in the respect of the above property in any manner, the same will not be binding on my clients. In this behalf if any person having any Objections or claims can lodge the same with the undersigned along with supporting documentary evidence within Fifteen days of this Notice. Later on the same will not be entertained and my client proceed to deal with said property as his like.

Place: Bangalore
Dated: 02.05.2026

H.D.BASAPPA, Advocate
"G.R.COMPLEX", # 31, 1st Floor, Service Road, Domlur Layout, Opp.BBMP Office, Domlur, Bangalore-560 071
Mobile : 9986349626
E-Mail :basappahd2018@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice is issued on behalf of My client **Smt. Lakshmi Devi B, W/o Ramachandra B** to bring the notice of the general public that **Original registered sale deed doc. No.YAN-1-20510-2006-07** of Book-1, stored in CD No.YAND248 dated.08.11.2006, registered in the office of the sub-registrar Yelahanka, executed by Smt.B Channamma and others in **favour of Smt.Lakshmi Devi W/o Sri.B Ramachandra,** is missing/ lost/ misplaced in respect of schedule property.

If any person/s, firm, company, institution or organization has any claim are holding the afore mentioned document or schedule property, they may contact the undersigned in writing within **07 days** from the date of this notice failing which it will be presumed that there are no claims.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the immovable property bearing municipal No.235/220/A, old No.279/220/A, measuring East to West: 25 feet and North to South: 30 feet, in all measuring 750 Sq feet, situated at Chowdeswari Layout, 1st Division of Yelahanka, Bangalore North Taluk, Now Yelahanka Taluk, and bounded on :- **East by:** Chowdappa's property, **West by:** Rangaiah's Property, **North by:** Road, **South by:** Narasimhaih's Property.

Shivanand Teli, B.SC L.L.B. **Advocate** #23 112, 1st Floor, Akshyanagar Main Road, Atturu Layout Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore-560004.
Ph: 9902019124.9902019124

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRailwayindia
Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE No.50 to 53 _ DRM_W_HYB_26 dt. 29/04/2026 PUB/154

On behalf of the President of India, Divisional Railway Manager/ Works, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites Open Tenders for the following works through **e-procurement up to 15.00 hours of 25/05/2026.**

Tender No.: 50_DRM_W_HYB _26, **Name of the work:** HYB: SC-MUE: Construction of RUB at KM 601/15-17 (OHE) (trespassing location) at Gundlapochampalli yard., **Approx Value (Rs.):** 7,18,58,947.00, **EMD (Rs.):** 14,37,200.00

Tender No.: 51_DRM_W_HYB _26, **Name of the work:** Hyderabad Division: SC-MUE Section: Proposal for extension of exg RUB Br No2 (2 vents of 6Mx5M RCC Box by launching of RCC Boxes) and Exg Br No 1A (1 vent of 2Mx2M RCC Box with Air pushing and Cast-in-situ method) connection with the work of "Doubling of Malkajgiri - Moulali Gate cabin)., **Approx Value (Rs.):** 2,06,88,559.00, **EMD (Rs.):** 4,13,800.00

Tender No.: 52_DRM_W_HYB _26, **Name of the work:** MJF-MLY section: Laying and Linking of Track for Doubling of line between MJF-MLY for a length of 2.50 Km., **Approx Value (Rs.):** 2,79,13,909.00, **EMD (Rs.):** 5,58,300.00

Tender No.: 53_DRM_W_HYB _26, **Name of the work:** MJF-MLY section: Laying of Formation for a proposed doubling work between MJF-MLY stations., **Approx Value (Rs.):** 2,93,30,760.00, **EMD (Rs.):** 5,86,600.00

For further details visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Divisional Railway Manager/ Works/Hyderabad
A179

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at http://www.ireps.gov.in or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

6% YoY growth white-collar hirings have witnessed in April, driven by insurance, BPO/ITeS, and real estate sectors, as per Naukri JobSpeak Index report

Car sales remain strong despite geopolitical crisis

Maruti led the momentum with highest-ever monthly PV sales of 187,704 units in April compared with 138,704 units a year-ago

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

DESPITE the ongoing crisis in West Asia, which has rattled global equity markets and cast a shadow over economic growth, demand for passenger vehicles (PVs) remains strong in India with industry dispatches growing sharply to about 4.50 lakh units in April 2026 compared to 3.54 vehicles dispatched in the same month last year.

India's largest carmaker - Maruti Suzuki (MSIL) led the momentum by reporting its highest-ever monthly PV sales at 187,704 units in April 2026 as against 138,704 units a year-ago, 35% year-on-year growth.

MSIL senior executive officer for marketing and sales Partho Banerjee attributed the growth to three tailwinds - GST reduction, income tax relief and repo rate cuts. He expects demand momentum for MSIL to continue as they gain traction in the SUV space and deeper penetration into rural India. Banerjee said a growth of 250% in April 2026 for the mini segment reflects that a vast number of two-wheeler consumers are upgrading to four-wheelers.

"Our rural penetration is 52.3%. A rise in penetration of 2.4% from the last year is a huge impact on the overall sales," said Banerjee, adding that a rise in fuel prices in future may impact sales of smaller cars.

Mahindra & Mahindra sold 56,331 vehicles in the domestic market, a growth of 8% and overall, 57,833 vehicles, including exports. Nalinikanth Gollagunta, CEO, Automotive Division, M&M said, "The year 2027 has begun on a positive note in April by achieving SUV sales of 56331 units."

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles retained the second spot in the domestic market with sales in April 2026 coming at 59,000 units, compared to 45,199 units during April 2025, up 30.5% YoY. Hyundai Motor (HMIL) achieved monthly domestic sales of 51,902 units in April 2026, up 17% YoY. HMIL also achieved monthly export sales of 13,708 units in April 2026.

Gaining momentum

Maruti led the momentum with highest-ever monthly PV sales at **187,704 units** in April as against **138,704 units** in the year-ago month

Maruti attributes the growth to GST reduction, income tax relief and repo rate cuts

Tata Motors PV retains second spot in domestic market with sales in April coming at **59,000 units**

Mahindra & Mahindra sold **56,331 vehicles** in the domestic market, a growth of **8%**

Hyundai Motor monthly domestic sales of **51,902 units** in April, up **17% YoY**

GST mop-up at record ₹2.43 lakh cr

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

GOODS and services tax (GST) revenue reached a historic milestone in April 2026, with gross collections climbing to a record high of ₹2.43 lakh crore.

The 8.7% year-on-year increase was primarily due to a 25.8% surge in import-related taxes, which stood at ₹57,580 crore. Experts attribute the rise to higher import costs triggered by global supply chain disruptions and the ongoing West Asia crisis, which has impacted commodity movements.

However, revenue from domestic transactions grew by only 4.3% to reach ₹1.85 lakh crore. Pratik Jain, partner, Price Waterhouse & Co LLP, said, "Growth in import-led revenues continues to outpace domestic transactions, which could indicate some softness in consumption—possibly reflecting a moderation in discretionary spending amid ongoing geopolitical uncertainties."

As per Vivek Jalan, Partner, Tax Connect Advisory Services LLP, a multi-disciplinary tax consulting firm, the net domestic collections remained flat as refunds — primarily under the inverted duty structure. These refunds exclude the growing ITC accumulation on input services, which continues under GST 2.0's deepened inverted duty framework.

"While this accumulation has maintained collections, it has simultaneously raised business expenses, a concern flagged to the GST Council for correction in its upcoming 57th meeting," he says.

Collection from central GST during the month was ₹52,140 crore and SGST at ₹61,331 crore. After accounting for a 19.3% increase in total refunds, which reached ₹31,793 crore, the total net GST revenue settled at ₹2.11 lakh crore, a 7.3% rise as against the ₹1.96 lakh crore collected in April 2025.

Showing Resilience

	Month	Gross GST collection (₹ lakh crore)
2026	APR'26	2.43
	MARCH	2.00
	FEB	1.83
	JAN	1.93
2025	DEC'25	1.74
	NOV	1.70
	OCT	1.96
	SEPT	1.89
	AUG	1.86
	JULY	1.95
	JUNE	1.86
	MAY	2.01
	APR	2.23

UNDER SCRUTINY

India on US priority watch list over IP rule concerns

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

INDIA is on the 'priority watch list' of the US in the latest Special 301 Report for 2026, released on April 30, sdue to persistent differences over intellectual property (IP) rules, especially in the pharmaceutical sector. India has remained on the priority watch list since 1990s, reflecting long-standing divergences over patent standards and access to medicines.

As per the latest Special 301 Report, India is one of six countries on this list due to ongoing concerns regarding the protection and enforcement of IP rights, especially in the pharmaceutical and digital sectors.

The US Trade Representative (USTR) flagged inconsistent progress in India's IP regime, noting steps such as the Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024 and increased staffing at the patent office. "There continues to be a lack of progress on many long-standing IP concerns raised in prior Special 301 Reports. India remains one of the world's most challenging major economies with respect to protection and enforcement of IP," stated the report.

Section 3(d) of India's Patents Act prohibits patenting new forms of known substances unless they demonstrate significantly enhanced therapeutic efficacy. It prevents evergreening, where companies extend patent terms for minor modifications. According to the USTR, such provisions create uncertainty for innovators. Though, India's stance is fully compliant with WTO norms.

IPR ISSUES

1. India remains on the priority watch list since the 1990s
2. USTR flags inconsistent progress in India's IP rules
3. India's stance is fully compliant with WTO norms

'RBI rule leaves Tata Sons with no option but to go public'

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

MARKETS advocacy group InGovern has said the Reserve Bank of India's April 10 and 29 directions on upper-layer non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) leave the Tata Group with no option but to go public. It termed Tata Sons' attempt to remain a private entity by seeking to de-register its NBFC licence as "dead on arrival".

Filed in March 2024, the application has now been rendered substantively and procedurally deficient by the evolving regulatory landscape of 2026, the group said in a report. It added that, to uphold the integrity of financial markets and ensure compliance with the 2026 framework, the RBI should issue a definitive public order rejecting Tata Sons' application for de-registration of its NBFC licence at the earliest.

"With these directions from the RBI, the regulatory landscape has shifted significantly, and there is no remaining legal basis to provide an exemption to an entity of this magnitude. Tata Sons should be issued a clear directive to initiate the listing process as an upper-layer NBFC by March 2027 deadline, in strict accordance with the latest master directions," the report said.

While the April 10 draft directions propose a strictly quantitative ₹1 lakh crore asset threshold for automatic upper-layer classification, the April 29 directions make it amply clear that even indirect exposure to public deposits or credit renders parametric scoring and debt-reduction defences obsolete, the report said.

It may be noted that, to circumvent the September 2025 RBI deadline for upper-layer NBFCs to list — issued in October 2022 — Tata Sons retired over ₹22,000 crore of debt by March 2024 and, in the same month, moved an application to the regulator to cancel its NBFC licence. However, the RBI has neither formally accepted nor rejected the application yet. In its latest upper-layer NBFC list issued in January 2025, the RBI included Tata Sons. This is despite it being a core investment company that does not accept public deposits or have outstanding debt.

Growth to decline below 6% if oil prices stay above $110

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

ECONOMISTS see a severe hit to the economy in terms of growth, inflation and consumption demand if crude oil — which crossed $126.4 a barrel this week, the highest since March 2022 — continues to trade higher for longer. Analysts predict that if crude remains above the $110-a-barrel mark for an extended period, FY27 growth may plummet below 6%, the fiscal deficit could widen by 50 basis points, and inflation may shoot past 5%.

ICRA Ratings chief economist Aditi Nayar has mapped three macro scenarios based on crude prices. In the worst-case outcome, she sees growth plunging to around 5% or even lower, with inflation crossing the 5% mark.

"We have worked out three scenarios for FY27 based on crude averaging $85, $105 and $125 a barrel. If crude averages at $125 a barrel in FY27, then growth could fall to 5% or lower, and inflation would exceed 5%," Nayar told TNIE. She added that the impact on inflation would depend on the extent of pass-through to fuel pump prices, which in turn would affect consumption and growth. However, she didn't quantify the demand impact, which had picked up following GST rate cuts last September.

The economy is likely to close FY26 with 7.5% growth and 2.1% retail inflation, while wholesale price inflation stood at a low 0.7%. The current account deficit (CAD) is expected at 0.9% and the fiscal deficit at 4.5%, when crude averaged $71.7 a barrel.

In comparison, if crude averages $85 a barrel, FY27 growth would be around 6.5%. If it averages $105, growth could slow to 5.8%, Nayar said. Inflation in these scenarios would be 4.5% and 4.8%, respectively, while wholesale inflation could be 3.5%, 4.2% and 5% across the three scenarios. CAD is projected at 1.7%, 2.4% and 3.1%, while the fiscal deficit could widen to 4.6%, 4.8% and 5% of GDP, respectively.

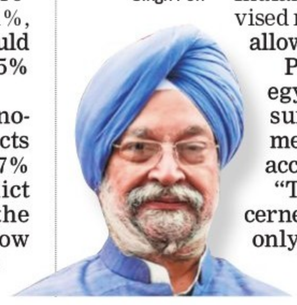
Rajni Sinha, chief economist at Care Ratings, expects growth to moderate to 6.7% in FY27 from a pre-conflict projection of 7.2% in the base case, and to dip below 6% in an extreme scenario.

FUEL PRICE

PANIC OVER ENERGY CRISIS WON'T IMPACT POLICY DECISION: PURI

PUSHPITA DEY @ Surat

> India has not allowed kitchens to run short. Have not revised petrol and diesel prices. Have not allowed panic to become policy
>
> —Hardeep Singh Puri



UNION Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday assured that the panic over the energy crisis won't impact the policy decision of the government and all possible measures will be taken to shield the country from the global shock.

Discarding the claims of the energy price rise in the near future after the state elections are over, he emphasised that the energy prices are not linked to the elections. During his address at the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference in Surat on Friday, Puri said, "India has not allowed Indian kitchens to run short. We have not revised retail, petrol and diesel prices. We have not allowed panic to become policy."

Puri emphasised that India's energy strategy continues to prioritise stability and consumer welfare, underscoring the government's commitment to ensure uninterrupted access to essential fuels.

"The commitment to the consumer is concerned, zero (fuel price) increase, but that is not only in these last 60 days, also in the last 4 years Yes, if the time comes, the government will take the decision."

ASIANOMICS

SOUTH KOREA

APRIL EXPORTS RISE 48.0% AS CHIP BOOM EXTENDS

South Korean exports rose for an 11th month in April, beating forecasts as the global appetite for artificial intelligence infrastructure boosted semiconductor sales to offset jitters from the Middle East conflict. Exports from Asia's fourth-largest economy, a bellwether for global trade, jumped 48.0% from a year earlier, government data showed on Friday. Semiconductor exports rose 173% from a year earlier, buoyed by rising contract prices for memory chips, the industry ministry said in a statement. Shipments of petroleum products rose 40% on higher crude prices, while computer-related exports also soared 516%, driven by strong demand for solid-state drives amid the AI boom. Automobile exports fell 5.5% from a year earlier, weighed down by the Middle East tensions and expanding U.S. car production, the ministry said. Exports of electric and hybrid vehicles, however, rose 23% and 9%, respectively.

JAPAN

YEN JUMPS HOURS AFTER INTERVENTION

The yen suddenly surged against dollar on Friday, a day after Tokyo authorities were believed to have intervened to prop up the Japanese currency. The dollar declined by 0.66% to a session low of 155.6 from 157.12 earlier. The yen rose by 3% on Thursday after a steady stream of official buying pushed dollar to a low of 155.5 yen from 158.3 over the course of about an hour. It was not clear what was behind Friday's move, but analysts said after Thursday the market would be on edge for any sudden moves in the currency. Japan's top currency diplomat Atsushi Mimura said earlier on Friday that speculation remained rife, a blunt warning that officials were ready to step back into markets after intervening just hours earlier to support the yen, which has lost 5% in the last three months alone.

SINGAPORE

PM FLAGS ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN ON HORMUZ CLOSURE

Singapore's prime minister on Friday warned that economic growth will slow this year and some countries may slip into recession as the Middle East crisis keeps the Strait of Hormuz closed. In a May Day speech, Lawrence Wong said the war was not expected "to be over anytime soon" and supply disruptions may worsen in the months ahead. Shipping through the strait, which handles a fifth of global oil and gas, has been stopped since the US and Israel began bombing Iran on Feb 28. Some regional countries are facing fuel shortages, airlines have cut flights and factories are reporting delays, he said. He didn't give any figures, but the trade ministry in February said it expected the economy to expand 2.0-4.0% this year, a bump from its previous forecast of 1.0-3.0%. Singapore is dealing with the crisis from a position of strength because of policies it implemented in the past to build energy resilience.

GCCs turn to hybrid models amid AI push

PADMINI DHRUVARAJ @ Bengaluru

GLOBAL Capability Centres (GCCs) are increasingly deepening ties with consulting and IT services firms as they navigate rapid shifts in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and global product ownership. The move marks a shift towards hybrid operating models, particularly among mid-sized centres balancing capability-building with speed and cost pressures.

Industry leaders say this growing reliance on external partners is not a sign of structural weakness, but a deliberate strategy.

"GCCs are not structurally dependent on external partners, nor is this a temporary gap," said Arindam Sen, partner and GCC sector lead – technology, media & entertainment and telecommunications at EY India. "The reliance is often intentional and strategic. GCCs may consciously choose not to insource everything to avoid fixed-cost lock-in, reduce risk, and maintain flexibility."

Instead, many GCCs are choosing to keep high-value, complex problem-solving in-house, while tapping external partners for specialised skills and speed. This is visible in fast-evolving areas such as artificial intelligence.

"Areas such as AI are evolving too rapidly across agentic AI, GenAI, and platforms, for it to be efficient or cost-effective to internalise everything," Sen said. "GCCs may deliberately leverage partner ecosystems to accelerate innovation, access specialist capabilities, and maintain speed and resilience, while retaining strategic ownership and decision-making control in-house."

Shalini Pillay, partner & india leader – Global Capability Centres at KPMG in India, described the shift as part of an ongoing evolution rather than a structural reset. "Adopting Hybrid Operating Models has been core to the evolution of the model... GCCs have leveraged third parties to bridge some very fundamental gaps," she said. As global enterprises struggle to prepare for AI at scale, GCCs are increasingly using external partners to build readiness.

Growing reliance on external partners

Industry leaders say this growing reliance on external partners is not a sign of structural weakness, but a deliberate strategy

'Over the moon' regarding Apple's India prospect: Cook

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

INDIA still accounts for a modest share of Apple Inc.'s business despite the company performing strongly in the market for some time, CEO Tim Cook said on Friday.

Cook, who is set to be succeeded by John Ternus from September 1, 2026, said he is "over the moon" about India's growth prospects. Describing India as the world's second-largest smartphone market and the third-largest PC market, he noted that across products—from iPhone to Mac, iPad, and Watch—over half of Apple's customers in the country are new to those products, indicating strong expansion of its installed base.

"I think it (read India) is a huge opportunity for us. It is the second-largest smartphone market in the world and the third-largest PC market. Despite doing extremely well there for quite some time, we still have a modest share, which speaks to the opportunity we have," Cook said.

Banks asked to play greater role in global currency mkts

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

RESERVE Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday called on Indian banks to step up their role in global currency markets, urging them to evolve into active market-makers if the offshore-dominated rupee ecosystem is to be brought onshore.

Speaking at the FIMMDA-PDAI annual conference in Amsterdam, Malhotra said Indian banks currently engage largely with offshore market-makers rather than directly with end-users in the global rupee market — a structural limitation that needs to be addressed. "If the global INR market has to be on-shored, Indian banks will need to evolve as market-makers globally," he said, signalling the central bank's intent to deepen domestic currency markets and reduce reliance on offshore hubs. The governor's remarks come amid a broader push by the RBI to strengthen India's financial market infrastructure and improve price discovery in rupee assets.

AFI warning for athletes ahead of Federation Cup

The Athletics Federation of India has announced that any athlete who does not turn up without valid reason after making entry at the Federation Cup to be held in Ranchi from May 22-25 could be barred from taking part in the subsequent event. Over the years, the AFI has faced the problem of athletes entering their names but not turning up during competitions.

India men's team celebrate after beating Chinese Taipei on Friday | BADMINTON PHOTO

Smells like team spirit: India men march into semis

Country's shuttlers beat Chinese Taipei 3-0 to enter last-four stage of Thomas Cup

ANMOL GURUNG @ Chennai

THE celebrations were palpable. As soon as Ayush Shetty wrapped up the match against Lin Chun-yi of Chinese Taipei, the members of the men's badminton team raced to the court and laid out their emotions by forming a huddle. Given India's handy lead, they had been anticipating that moment for some time. When it finally arrived, the shuttlers, fully immersed in celebrations, were looking to soak in the moment. Ayush had just confirmed India a bronze medal (at the very least) in the Thomas Cup — considered to be the World Championships in team competition — at Horsens, Denmark. It was pure ecstacy.

Moreover, the shuttlers can now dream bigger. They now have a brighter chance of retracing 2022 exploits, a year they had captured a historic gold.

Ayush, with his win over All England and India Open winner Lin, had helped the team secure a 3-0 victory and a spot in the last-four stage of the premier competition.

Ayush, who has been operating at a different level since the start of Asian Championships, was just too sharp for Lin, who's yet to regain his golden touch after injury. The 20-year-old from Karnataka was willing to engage in long rallies and executed some fine winners to kill off those rallies, much to the dismay of Lin. Ayush also pulled off some insane returns to frustrate Lin, who gradually ran out of ideas.

In the end, Ayush was the clear winner, wrapping up the contest in 48 minutes. "Ayush was amazing and the boys are doing really well. Lakshya Sen and the doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have also stepped up. This is a massive step and I believe the boys can go all the way and reclaim gold," Sanjay Mishra, BAI general secretary, told this daily.

Lakshya, the first Indian to take the court on the day, survived two match points before going on to overcome Chou Tien Chen, handing the team a vital 1-0 lead in the process.

Despite having the edge for large parts of the opening game, Lakshya was forced to relinquish the lead towards the business end by the 36-year-old Chou, who landed some finely-crafted winners to edge ahead before eventually going on to close out the game with a smash aimed at Lakshya's body.

The momentum was clearly on Chou's side as he raced to a 10-4 lead in the second essay. The odds were against Lakshya then. But the Indian hung on. After a marathon rally, he produced a cross-court smash to get a vital point. Later, he reeled off four straight points to go level before going on to save to couple of match points and take the tie to a decider. The third essay was a tightly-contested affair at the start before Lakshya seized control of the proceedings. **Q/F results:** India **bt** Chinese Taipei 3-0: **MS1:** Lakshya Sen bt Chou Tien Chen 18-21, 22-20, 21-17. **MD1:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty bt Chiu Hsiang Chieh/Wang Chi-Lin 23-21, 19-21, 21-12. **MS2:** Ayush Shetty bt Lin Chun-yi 21-16, 21-17.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

Familiar rivals CSK, MI lock horns in key clash

ASHOK VENUGOPAL @ Chennai

AS the season crosses the halfway-mark, Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians – two of the storied franchises of the Indian Premier League (IPL) are struggling for consistency this season. On Saturday at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, both sides will be keen to take a step towards consistency. After their eight-wicket loss to Gujarat Titans here, Chennai remained at sixth position with six points. Meanwhile, Mumbai were defeated by Sunrisers Hyderabad at home on Wednesday (April 29) and languished at ninth in the points table.

One point of debate from the time the season began was the fitness of former captain MS Dhoni. He was ruled out for the first two weeks of the season due to a calf strain. However, that time has elapsed, but doubts still remain on his contention. CSK's batting coach Michael Hussey provided an update on his fitness. "M S (Dhoni) is doing really well. Hopefully, he'll be back as soon as possible. I'm not sure if that will be tomorrow (Saturday) or the match after, but he's progressing well," Hussey said in the pre-match press conference on Friday. Dhoni has travelled with the squad to Hyderabad and Mumbai, but is yet to make an appearance. The primary concern is his ability to sustain running intensity. "Dhoni has been working on his running speeds, which was probably the main concern. From a skill perspective, we're very confident in his batting and wicket-keeping. It was more about ensuring he can maintain good running power, especially towards the back end of an innings where quick singles and twos are crucial," explained Hussey.

"Once he feels confident in his calf, I'm sure he'll give the signal that he's ready to go. At the moment, we're guided by him. We're waiting. I think all of Chennai is waiting," he added.

For Mumbai, this match is another opportunity to turn things around. Their head coach and former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene admitted that the team has been inconsistent. "For me to even analyse the first half of the season, quite a few games we've played good cricket but in patches. It's not good enough. The way some of the teams are playing - they're really consistent and pushing themselves. So if you're not competing at that same level, it's harder to win matches." he said on the eve of the match.

Likewise, Jayawardene's side also expects former captain and batter Rohit Sharma to return to fitness. "It's progressing well. He's working really hard to get back at it. So for us with the medical team, it's on a daily basis. We see how he feels, how he pulls up the next day. So we'll make a decision tomorrow (Saturday). We'll see him practicing on Friday as well (...)," he said.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

CSK's Sanju Samson and MI's Hardik Pandya during a training session at Chepauk in Chennai on Friday | ASHWIN PRASATH

BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

Two of the most successful IPL sides fight for relevance. A look at Chennai Super Kings' encounter against Mumbai Indians on Saturday...

Bumrah's reality check

For so long, Jasprit Bumrah has been sui generis, an outlier. But in a season where batters have gone supernova, the juggernaut has struggled to swim against the tide. Two wickets at an average of 132 are not good returns.

Kamboj, a silver lining

Another season is about to be a washout for Chennai. But Anshul Kamboj has emerged from the wreckage thanks to his 14 wickets. They will need him to produce similar returns if they are to have any chance.

Brevis's below-par returns

Chennai's batting, save Sanju Samson, has been a constant worry this campaign. And no one has underperformed as much as Dewald Brevis. He came in with an injury but is yet to get going.

CSK vs MI, Chennai, 7.30 PM, LIVE on Star Sports and JioHotstar

Opener Nissanka sets the stage alight with stylish half-century

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

IN terms of swagger, not a lot of openers can match Pathum Nissanka. Even if he hasn't always produced match-winning knocks, it's always stylish, every shot oozing with skill and grace. It's like a trip to the cirque du soleil. Flamboyance with a capital F.

It certainly was all of that against Rajasthan Royals on Friday night. Chasing a steep 226, the Sri Lankan, long identified as the next in line in terms of batting royalty from the island nation, was in the mood right from the opening stages of the powerplay. Jofra Archer and Nandre Burger have been the standout new ball pair but that's the thing with the pint-sized opener. When he marries his swagger with sui generis skill, he transforms into a world beater. He's blessed with very fast hands and an innate ability to play behind square on both sides off pacers. It's exactly how he set the ball rolling for Delhi Capitals; off his fifth ball of the night, he dumped one Archer ball behind over long leg. He picked it up off his pads and just used the pace. Two Archer balls later, he got hit on the helmet via a thin deflection off the bat but he was in mood to relent.

After surviving a concussion test, he late cut a high pace ball from fourth stump through third-man. Nonchalance. He was just starting.

Off Burger in the next over, there were two huge sixes square on the leg side. They were both on pace above 140 kph deliveries but the 27-year-old simply used the pace on offer. When both Burger and Archer were dealt with, Brijesh Sharma came in for the same treatment, another pull. This shot incidentally brought up a 23-ball 50 inside the powerplay. At the other end, KL Rahul was on 19 off 13. The fun stopped soon after but Nissanka had laid an ideal platform. He averages less than 30 in this format but teams will take a tradeoff as long as they know they are guaranteed a few knocks like this per season. **Brief scores:** Rajasthan Royals 225/6 in 20 ovs (Parag 90, Ferreira 47, Jurel 42) **lost to** Delhi Capitals 226/3 in 19.1 ovs (Nissanka 62, Rahul 75).

Delhi Capitals' Pathum Nissanka after playing a shot on Friday | AFP

CITY, ARSENAL INVOLVED IN DOGFIGHT

THE PREMIER LEAGUE'S BUSINESS END IS HERE. THE TITLE IS UP FOR GRABS WITH BOTH MAN CITY AND ARSENAL INVOLVED IN A DOGFIGHT. A LOOK AT THE REMAINING FIXTURES...

Arsenal have chance to go 6 points clear

On Saturday, the Gunners have the chance to open up a six points lead at the top, albeit temporarily. City don't play till Monday night so this represents an opportunity for the North London side to put some pressure. City, of course, will have two games in hand.

Title could come down to goal difference

If both sides win all their remaining games between now and the end of the season, the title will be decided by goal difference. That's how tight it has become up top.

Manchester City masters of big finish

While Arsenal have picked up the habit of dropping points of late, this time of the season is usually when City go on long runs. And, true to form, City have won their last three games while Arsenal have lost two of their three matches.

FOR ARSENAL ■ vs Fulham (May 2) ■ West Ham (May 10) ■ Burnley (May 18) ■ vs Crystal Palace (May 24)

FOR MAN CITY ■ vs Everton (May 4) ■ vs Brentford (May 9) ■ vs Crystal Palace (May 13) ■ vs Bournemouth (May 19) ■ vs Aston Villa (May 24)

TABLE (TOP TWO)

Team	M	W	L	GD	Pts
Arsenal	34	22	7	38	73
Man City	33	21	7	37	70

Barca can win title this weekend

Barcelona will wrap up La Liga this weekend as long as they beat Osasuna and Real Madrid don't match that result a day later. Right now, the Catalans are on 85 points with five games to go. Real are 11 points behind. However, if Barcelona lose and Real win, the latter can pile some pressure as the two clubs meet in the league next weekend.

EXPRESS READ

Rugby Premier League in Hyderabad from June 16

NEW DELHI: GMR Sports, in partnership with Rugby India announced that the second edition of the Rugby Premier League (RPL) will be held at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad from June 16 to 28. The RPL returns in the fast-paced Rugby 7s format, aligning with the league's long-term vision of accelerating the growth and global competitiveness of rugby in India.

Santner out for a month due to shoulder injury

AUCKLAND: New Zealand white ball skipper Mitchell Santner will be out of action for at least a month due to a grade three ACL shoulder injury he sustained during the Indian Premier League. The 34-year-old injured his left shoulder while fielding during Mumbai Indians' match against the Chennai Super Kings on April 23. New Zealand Cricket confirmed the same on Friday.

5 Indian quartets eye '27 World C'ships berths

GABORONE (BOTSWANA): Five Indian quartets will be looking to book berths for next year's World Championships through the World Athletics Relays beginning on Saturday. The 21-member Indian team, led by star sprinter Animesh Kujur, has eight women in it. First day's action will begin with the qualifying round one of the mixed 4x100m event with India competing in heat number two.

Sinner outplays Fils to reach Madrid Open final

AGENCIES @ Madrid

WORLD NO 1 Jannik Sinner downed Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-4 on Friday to reach the Madrid Open final.

The Italian won his 22nd straight match to book a place in Sunday's final, where he will aim to win a record fifth consecutive Masters 1000 title.

With his chief rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured, Sinner is firm favourite to triumph at the Caja Magica and add to recent titles at Indian Wells, Miami and Monte Carlo. The 24-year-old will face second seed Alexander Zverev or promising Belgian Alexander Blockx in the final.

"I played at a very high level, but I focus on always raising my level a little. Especially when the tournament gets serious... You have to raise your level if you want to keep going," Sinner told Movistar. The Italian admitted he was feeling a little tired after playing so many matches of late. "Obviously there's a bit of fatigue -- mentally I feel good, but there is some physical tiredness, my body isn't completely fresh, but that's normal, and I think it's a very positive thing for me, because it means I'm playing a lot of matches," Sinner said.

"Of course on Sunday we'll try to do even better, but whatever happens, I've reached another final in a very important tournament."

Beating Sinner right now seems a near-impossible feat and the four-time Grand Slam winner started superbly against Barcelona Open winner Fils, who has impressed since returning from injury in February. The Italian broke in third game when Fils went long to lead 2-1. Sinner broke again in the fifth game with Fils, ranked 25th in the world, unable to cope with his sheer power. The Frenchman has not yet reached a Masters 1000 final and with Sinner in sumptuous form it quickly became clear he would have to wait a little longer.

EUROPA LEAGUE

Wood punishes Digne blunder as Forest take slender lead against Villa

AGENCIES @ Nottingham

NOTTINGHAM Forest seized the advantage in their Europa League semifinal against Aston Villa as Chris Wood's penalty sealed a 1-0 win in the first leg on Thursday.

Wood netted from the spot in the second half after a needless handball by Villa defender Lucas Digne in the all-English clash at the City Ground.

The New Zealand striker's fifth goal of an injury-plagued season moved Forest within touching distance of their first European final since 1980.

Vitor Pereira's side are on a nine-match unbeaten run in all competitions, carrying them five points clear of the Premier League relegation zone and to the brink of the Europa showpiece.

Forest will make the 50-mile trip to Villa Park for the second leg on May 7, with the winners facing Braga or Freiburg in the final in Istanbul on May 20.

Braga won 2-1 in the other semifinal first leg on Thursday.

"It's nice to have the advantage but going to Villa Park will be a tough game. They're good at their place," Wood said.

"It's small moments that can potentially change games. Thankfully it went in our favour tonight."

Making it to Istanbul would be a dramatic finale to Forest's soap-opera season, featuring four managers and a tense relegation battle.

After the sacking of Nuno Espirito Santo, Ange Postecoglou and Sean Dyche, Pereira had led Forest to their first European semi-final since losing against Anderlecht in the 1983-84 UEFA Cup.

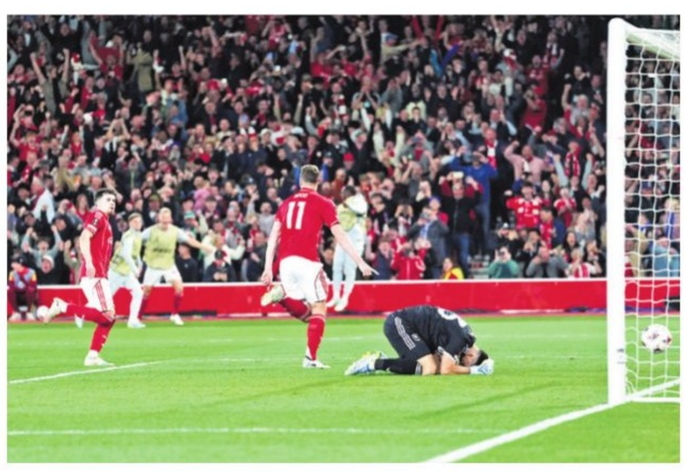
Crowned European champions in 1979 and 1980 in their golden era under Brian Clough, Forest have been starved of success over the last three decades. Playing in Europe for the first time since 1995-96, Forest are chasing a first major trophy since the 1990 League Cup.

They have not been in any major final since losing against Manchester United in the 1992 League Cup.

Meanwhile, Braga will take a slender advantage to Germany for the return leg of their semi-final after Mario Dorgeles scored in injury-time to give the hosts a 2-1 win over Freiburg in the first leg.

Demir Ege Tiknaz opened the scoring early for the hosts, before Vincenzo Grifo quickly levelled for Freiburg.

Semifinal results (1st leg): Nottingham Forest **1-0** Aston Villa; Braga **2-1** Freiburg.



Forest's Chris Wood celebrates after converting the penalty on Thursday | AP

Since the 1950s, billions of tonnes of plastic waste have accumulated, polluting ecosystems and posing risks to human health

UN Plastics treaty talks regain momentum

AS ROADMAP SETS STAGE FOR CRUCIAL 2026 NEGOTIATIONS

S V KRISHNA CHAITANYA @ Chennai

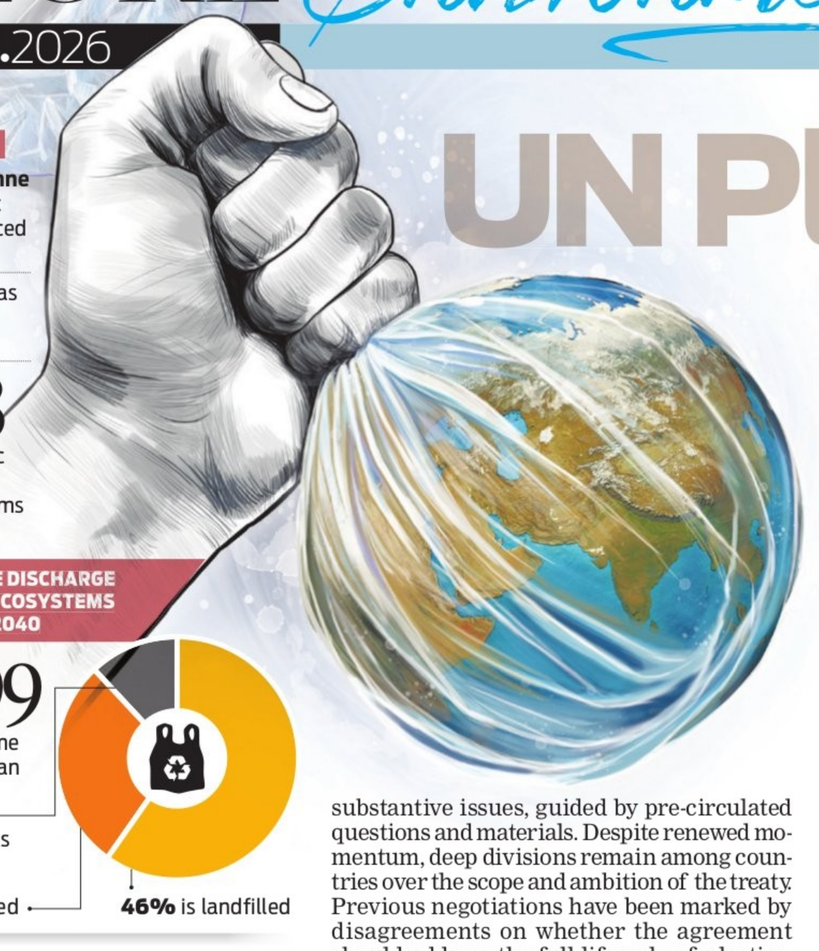
THE global effort to craft a legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution has entered a decisive new phase, with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) outlining a roadmap aimed at breaking a prolonged deadlock and steering negotiations toward a final agreement.

According to a summary of the Bureau meeting held on March 26, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) is now focused on a structured series of informal consultations and preparatory meetings leading up to the next major negotiation round, known as INC-5.4.

The renewed push comes after repeated failures to reach consensus during earlier sessions, including the high-stakes INC-5.2 meeting in Geneva in August 2025, where negotiations collapsed amid deep divisions among countries.

The new roadmap, proposed by INC Chair Ambassador Julio Cordano, lays out a sequence of virtual and in-person meetings designed to rebuild trust and narrow differences among member states. These include informal 'Heads of Delegation' (HODs) meetings, both online and face-to-face, throughout 2026.

At the March Bureau meeting, officials stressed that these engagements are intended to ensure transparency, inclusivity and predictability in the process, while allowing countries to re-engage on contentious issues. A key component of the roadmap is the development of a single 'informal reference document' that captures progress made so far without prejudging unresolved issues or introducing new proposals. This document is expected to serve as a neutral basis for further negotiations.


PLASTIC FACTS
9.2 bn tonne plastic produced since 1950
7 bn tonne has turned into waste
19-23 mn tonne plastic waste get into aquatic ecosystems every year
PLASTIC WASTE DISCHARGE INTO AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS | TO TRIPLE BY 2040
75-199 mn tonne: Volume of plastics in ocean
~9% of plastic ever produced has been recycled
22% mismanaged
46% is landfilled

The process will include regular virtual HODs meetings — one of which was scheduled for April 30 — and an in-person meeting in Nairobi from June 30 to July 3. These sessions are expected to focus increasingly on substantive issues, guided by pre-circulated questions and materials. Despite renewed momentum, deep divisions remain among countries over the scope and ambition of the treaty. Previous negotiations have been marked by disagreements on whether the agreement should address the full lifecycle of plastics, including production and chemicals, or focus primarily on waste management.

Countries are also split on issues such as binding global rules versus voluntary national measures, financing mechanisms, and limits on plastic production. The March Bureau discussions acknowledged these differences, noting that member-led initiatives outside the formal roadmap could help bridge gaps, provided their outcomes are shared transparently with all participants.

UNEP officials and Bureau members repeatedly highlighted the need for inclusivity in the negotiation process. The Chair emphasised that all viewpoints must be acknowledged to build a common understanding and ensure legitimacy. To address concerns about participation, the roadmap includes efforts to rotate meeting times across regions and provide advance documentation to help delegations prepare effectively.

However, challenges remain. The Bureau noted logistical and financial constraints, including the high cost of providing interpretation services in all six UN languages for in-person meetings. Observer groups, including NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, and UN agencies, are expected to play a significant role in shaping discussions, although decision-making remains firmly in the hands of member states.

A webinar held on March 24 drew over 300 participants, reflecting strong interest from civil society. Observers have raised concerns about limited engagement opportunities, prompting the Chair to propose consultations with thematic groups and enhanced communication channels. While acknowledging their importance, the Bureau reiterated that the INC process is fundamentally member-driven, with observers contributing expertise and perspectives. The ultimate goal of the roadmap is to prepare the ground for INC-5.4, where substantive negotiations are expected to resume later in 2026. The session is widely seen as critical to finalising the treaty after years of stalled progress. The urgency is highlighted by the scale of the global plastic crisis. Since the 1950s, billions of tonnes of plastic waste have accumulated, polluting ecosystems and posing risks to human health.

With negotiations now entering a pivotal phase, the success of the roadmap will depend on whether countries can overcome entrenched differences and agree on a comprehensive, enforceable framework.

As the Chair noted in closing remarks to the Bureau, maintaining a transparent and inclusive dialogue will be essential to achieving a consensus—and delivering what could become one of the most significant environmental agreements of the decade.

XPLAINER

ARE SMALL HYDRO POWER PROJECTS ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY?

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

THE Union Cabinet recently approved a Small Hydro Power Development Scheme, with an outlay of ₹2,584.60 crore for five years till 2030-31. It will support installation of small hydro power (SHP) projects with an approximate capacity of 1,500 MW. The initiative is expected to benefit hilly and North Eastern states with potential for such projects.

With an installed capacity of up to 25 MW, the small hydro power plants are renewable energy projects, considered decentralized, reducing the need for long transmission lines which eventually helps lower transmission losses. The government claims that this scheme will revitalize the SHP sector and accelerate the exploitation of available potential. The scheme is projected to be environmentally sustainable as the projects avoid large-scale land acquisition, deforestation and the displacement of communities. Furthermore, it is expected to promote socio-economic development in remote areas by boosting local investment and creating long-term employment, given that project lifespans typically range from 40 years to over 60 years.

The Centre will provide financial support of up to 30 per cent of the project cost for hilly states and districts along international borders. In other states, the support will be 20 per cent of the project cost. An additional ₹30 crore has been allocated to assist state and Central government agencies in preparing detailed project reports.

However, experts and past experiences raise doubts about the claims that SHP projects are environmentally sustainable. Critics argue that these projects receive significant exemptions from environmental regulations, including public hearings. Evidence suggests that past SHP projects have been manipulated to appear eco-friendly, leaving affected communities in difficult situations and increasing the likelihood of human-animal conflicts.

Misleading environmental claims

Small hydro power projects are conditionally exempted from environmental regulations such as from environmental impact assessment (EIA), environmental clearance (EC), and public consultations in India. It opens the door of manipulation.

According to the EIA Notification of 2006, small hydro power projects (≤25 MW) are generally classified as category B projects, which means they get cleared at the state level. Some smaller projects, classified as B2, may be exempt from detailed EIA but are not necessarily exempt from EC itself. If a project is located in eco-sensitive areas (such as national parks or wildlife sanctuaries), EC is mandatory regardless of size. Under the 2006 framework, B2 category projects are not required to conduct an EIA. Reports suggest that a majority of small hydropower projects are often categorized as B2 projects. Public hearings are not required for B2 projects.

Experts disagree with the government's claims that SHP projects will be environmentally friendly and socio-economically beneficial for the Northeast and other hilly areas.

Himanshu Thakkar from the South Asia Network of Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) argues that the government's claims are misleading, given current policies do not require environmental, social or disaster impact assessments for such projects. He says there is no credible public consultation process in place, meaning local communities will bear all adverse effects from projects imposed on them without their consent. Thakkar wonders how SHPs will benefit local populations since profits will go to private companies while electricity will be supplied to the grid.

Professor Nilay Khare from Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology Bhopal (MANIT), Bhopal, points at challenges such as high costs, environmental concerns, long gestation periods and competition from solar energy associated with SHP projects.

Troubled past experiences

SANDRP has documented instances where several SHP projects in the Western Ghats exploited regulatory loopholes to bypass essential environmental assessments. Such actions not only undermine legal protections for the environment but also raise serious concerns about the long-term implications of these projects on the delicate ecosystems of the Western Ghats.

Additionally, details regarding submergence and rehabilitation of affected areas are often not disclosed until the last minute, leaving communities in precarious situations.

In the absence of public hearings, communities remain unaware of potential risks and become vulnerable to floods, droughts, submergence, loss of endemic and endangered species, increasing human-animal conflicts and isolation.

In 2011, the Karnataka High Court issued a stay on the construction of mini-hydel projects (MHPs) in the forest areas of the Western Ghats. This decision followed public interest litigations filed by conservationists, including the Western Ghats Environment Forum.

Conservationists raised concerns that the 25 MW limit for mini-hydel projects was being misused through 'debundling', which involves splitting larger projects into smaller ones to circumvent EIA. This practice was primarily observed in the Kageneri and Kanchankumari reserve forests, where exploitation of subsidies and preferential tariffs was reported. Additionally, carbon credits under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) were also being sought, they claimed. By early 2013, the state government informed the high court that it had cancelled 10 controversial mini-hydel projects in the Western Ghats and decided not to permit any new plants. Elsewhere, the Himachal Pradesh High Court took suo motu cognizance of alleged environmental violations and construction irregularities associated with the 20 MW Rora Khadd Hydroelectric Project located in Yula village of Kinnaur district.

However, Arunachal Pradesh anti-dam activist Bhanu Tarak welcomed the decision to promote SHP projects in the Northeast, but with caution. "Alternatives to large hydro project is the future of Arunachal Pradesh but SHP must ensure full participation of local indigenous stakeholders for getting their consent," said Tarak who led protests against big Siang Dam in the state.

Points to ponder

1 REGULATORY LOOPHOLES AND EXEMPTIONS

SHPs (≤25 MW) are classified as category B or B2 projects

Allows to bypass detailed EIA and EC

2 LACK OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND LOCAL IMPACT

Absence of public hearings for B2 projects means local communities are often unaware of potential risks

Can lead to displacement, loss of biodiversity and human-animal conflict

3 HISTORICAL LEGAL CHALLENGES

In 2011, Karnataka HC stayed on mini-hydel projects in the Western Ghats over environmental concerns

4 CALL FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

All stakeholders participation including Local communities can be beneficial

Critical that SHPs adhere to environmental clearance conditions especially in ecologically sensitive areas

An Old World rare blue spider catches conservation attention in Andhra

USHA PERI @ Visakhapatnam

IN a landscape where conservation attention often follows large mammals, an Old World arboreal spider, its sapphire body too striking to miss, has caught the attention in Andhra Pradesh and triggered a conservation status study.

It's Andhra Pradesh deputy chief minister K Pawan Kalyan's post on X that sent the curiosity levels soaring: "A rare jewel of the Eastern Ghats is finally getting the attention it deserves… This is one of many such stories to come," he stated referring to the state's latest effort to document the Peacock Tarantula.

The AP Forest Department, in collaboration with the Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society, has initiated a conservation status survey of the Peacock Tarantula (Poecilotheria metallica) in the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR). The exercise seeks to establish baseline information on its population, distribution and habitat, fundamental details that remain uncertain despite the species' recognised conservation status.

Endemic to a narrow stretch of forest in Andhra Pradesh, the tarantula is listed as 'Critically Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Its dependence on old-growth trees makes it particularly sensitive to changes in forest structure, while its limited range leaves little room for recovery if habitats are disturbed.

For field teams, the immediate task is to locate, record and understand. "This species is restricted to a small patch, and we do not yet have reliable estimates of its numbers. Understanding its population is essential before any meaningful conservation measures can be implemented," said Dr Shanti Priya Pandey, additional principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife). She added that conservation priorities must extend beyond well-known species. "It is not always about the size or visibility of a species, but its ecological role and current status," she added.

The study is being carried out with technical support from Wingham Wildlife Park in the United Kingdom, which has experience in maintaining captive populations of the species. Officials say the collaboration will help standardise survey methods and strengthen documentation.

Despite its limited public profile, the Peacock Tarantula plays a defined ecological role. As a predator, it feeds on insects such as crickets and grasshoppers, contributing to the regulation of their populations. Its habitat, typically mature trees with suitable crevices, also reflects the health of older forest systems.

This close association with old-growth habitat presents a challenge. The loss of mature trees not only reduces shelter but also affects the broader microhabitats that sustain the tarantula's prey.

Researchers and conservationists point out that studies of such species often extend beyond a single objective. By identifying and protecting specific habitat requirements, conservation measures can benefit a wider range of organisms within the same ecosystem.

Within NSTR, the current survey represents a measured expansion of focus from well-documented flagship species to those that remain under-studied. The findings, experts say, will inform habitat management and future conservation strategies, while adding to the limited body of knowledge on one of the region's most restricted-range species.

This species is restricted to a small patch, and we do not yet have reliable estimates of its numbers. Understanding its population is essential before any meaningful conservation measures can be implemented

- Dr Shanti Priya Pandey, additional PCCF (wildlife), AP

There is a lot more buzzing about **honeybees**

We found that tropical Asian honeybees follow familiar biological rules in some respects, but also show surprising differences that remind us how much there is still to learn

Dr Sruthi Unnikrishnan, Centre for Wildlife Studies

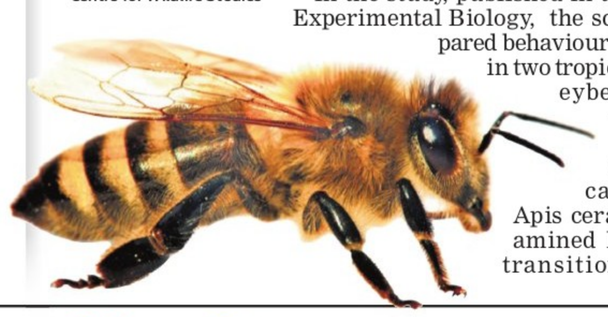
BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THERE is a lot more associated with the honeybees than just being the official pollinators on Planet Earth. Researchers from multiple leading institutions have found that they have behavioural maturity. The method in which the labour is divided among them is also based upon their age.

In a recent study titled 'Variation in Behavioural Maturation in Tropical Honey Bees Corresponds with Hormonal and Molecular Differences', experts explained how division of labour is based on a process of behavioural development in which the worker bee successively performs different tasks at different ages. Workers start with tasks within the nest and move on to become foragers.

The study was undertaken by researchers from Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Department of Biology in the University of Kassel in Germany and Department of Evolution, Ecology and Behaviour in University of Liverpool in United Kingdom.

In the study, published in the journal of Experimental Biology, the scientists compared behavioural maturation in two tropical Asian honeybee species — the open-nesting Apis florea and the cavity-nesting Apis cerana. They examined how workers transition from nest tasks to foraging. They noted that workers of A. cerana showed a faster and more uniform pace of behavioural maturation compared to the A. florea, suggesting that accelerated development is a derived trait linked to cavity-nesting behaviour.



In both species, hormones and chemical signals that prompted the worker bees to begin foraging broadly mirrored patterns that have been seen in the European honeybee Apis mellifera, suggesting these mechanisms are conserved across honeybee species.

"However, a key protein linked to nursing behaviour and the molecular signals associated with it did not show the same clear age or task-related patterns seen in A. mellifera, pointing to important differences between tropical and temperate honeybee lineages. A. florea workers consistently showed substantially higher vitellogenin expression than A. cerana workers, a striking finding whose biological function is yet to be understood," they noted in the study.

Dr Sruthi Unnikrishnan, lead author of the study, from Centre for Wildlife Studies, said, "Even closely-related honeybee species do not all organise their societies in the same way. We found that tropical Asian honeybees follow familiar biological rules in some respects, but also show surprising differences that remind us how much there is still to learn."

Dr Axel Brockmann from NCBS, a co-author said, "Asian honeybee research is crucial for India's food systems and biodiversity because these species pollinate many crops and wild plants, while comparative studies also offer global insights into how honeybees may respond to future climate change."

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02.05.2026
SATURDAY

DAY'S DIARY

Exclusion Zone

The Soviet government established an Exclusion Zone on May 2, 1986, soon after the Chernobyl disaster which took place on April 26 that year

THE DISASTER

Technicians attempted a poor experiment which caused an uncontrollable power surge and triggered a large fireball, releasing radioactive material

THE AFTERMATH

Following the disaster, the Soviet Union created a circle-shaped exclusion zone with a radius of about 18.6 miles centred on the nuclear power plant

ZONAL EXPANSION

It was later expanded to 1,600 square miles to include heavily radiated areas outside the initial zone, forcing people to evacuate for safety

A line-up of the best events this weekend

PG 2

WITH FRESH ATTENTION ON *THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA* FOLLOWING ITS SEQUEL'S RELEASE, FASHION INSIDERS REVISIT THE FILM'S FASHION LEGACY

DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

SRUTHI HEMACHANDRAN

A WOMAN sits behind a pristine desk, silver hair immaculate, glasses lowered enough to let her eyes do all the talking. Her look decoding and 'fixing', and you're left wondering what went wrong. A pause and, 'that's all,' said at a glacial pace. She has already moved on, flipping through high-fashion editorials and runway snaps. Authority in this room looks effortless and outside it is an ever-rushing world. This image cemented *The Devil Wears Prada* in pop culture. And this weekend, Meryl Streep (Miranda Priestly), Anne Hathaway (Andrea Sachs or Andy), Emily Blunt (Emily Charlton) and Stanley Tucci (Nigel) return to this world of fashion and power.

In Bengaluru's fashion circles, the film has become an early reference point. Harsha Kripalani, a luxury fashion-lifestyle influencer, remembers Andy's transformation as one of the film's defining moments. "I was completely dazzled, especially during Andy's (played by Hathaway) transformation. The styling, the layering, the endless stream of outfits felt like a visual fantasy and I remember dreaming of a walk-in closet filled with beautiful bags, shoes and statement pieces. Now, being part of the fashion and content world, my perspective has evolved. It's not just about beautiful clothes, its about storytelling, consistency and the work that goes into creating that effortless image," shares Kripalani, who relates most to Andy for finding her voice in a demanding world.

Call it 'oh-so-rare', but fashion designer Rini Phalgunan, finds herself on Team Emily in the film. She speaks of the subtle fatigue that comes with giving everything to an industry that doesn't always reciprocate with the same intensity. "Not because I'm bitter or territorial, but because I understand the person who has given everything to a world and watches someone walk and take it lightly. There's exhaustion that comes with loving an industry more than it loves you back. Andy gets the arc, but Emily gets the truth," she says.

The sequel, helmed by David Frankel and featuring Lady Gaga in a cameo role, drew mostly favourable critical response. With audiences already flocking to theatres, Kaustav Dey, model and beauty connoisseur, says he is curious to see what lies ahead for Priestly if she ever steps away from her world of perks and power. Adding that the film continues to spark appreciation for the world it portrays. He shares, "What stayed with me was how fashion was represented as a multi-billion-billion dollar industry that generated revenue and employment for many. Especially since it is so easy to call fashion frivolous because it is glamorous."

The film's visual world also carries its own cultural weight. Phalgunan, further refers to the cerulean speech which showed how even the most normal-looking colour is the result of intentional fashion decisions at the highest level. "The film set a blueprint: polished, aspirational, severe and European, with 'dressing for work' in the creative field tied to looking like you belong in the runway."

When it comes to styling, actor and lifestyle creator Sanjana Tiwari envisions Miranda's wardrobe evolving into something more adaptable and contemporary, without losing its presence. "I'd make it a little more fluid and less rigid. Still powerful silhouettes, but with softer elements," noting how today's professional woman moves across multiple roles through the day. Dey imagines Priestly favouring vintage selects and craft from grassroots artisans. He also points to Sachs' black Chanel suit with boots as a defining moment, still remembered as an expression of power dressing.

The promotional tour for *The Devil Wears Prada 2* had travelled across key global cities, with the cast's tailored silhouettes garnering as much attention as the film itself. Dey highlights a standout look from the tour – Blunt's tiered ballgown with a metallic-structured bust from Schiaparelli Couture, while Tiwari says she loved Hathaway's black Schiaparelli fit with striking gold petals during the early tours, while the background played, 'Yes, Monday through Sunday, I can turn a dance floor into a runway...', adding to the high-gloss energy of the showcases.

Anne Hathaway dazzles in a sparkly blue dress on the sets of *The Devil Wears Prada 2*

Meryl Streep as Miranda Priestly moments before the cerulean monologue (R); Anne Hathaway as Andy in the iconic cerulean sweater (L)

Streep and Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada 2*

This scene from the first instalment captures Miranda Priestly, Andy Sachs and Emily Charlton at a high-stakes charity benefit

> *The film set a blueprint... with 'dressing for work' in the creative field tied to looking like you belong in the runway*
> —Rini Phalgunan, fashion designer

GILL-TY LAUGHS

Comedian Kannan Gill swept the crowd away with laughter at his recent Not This Again tour stop in B'luru held at MLR Convention Centre, Whitefield

After a last-minute relay record run, Bengaluru sprinter Unnathi Aiyappa grapples with a near-miss at the World Championships and the belief it leaves behind

Bhagh girl Bhagh

ANJALI RAM

SOMETIMES, all it takes is one race – one imperfect, improvised, fully trusted run - to show how close you really are. Narrowly missing out on the World Relay Championship (set to happen in Gaborone, Botswana on May 2,3) qualification by a single spot, Bengaluru-based sprinter and hurdler Unnathi Aiyappa is holding on to what the moment gave her – belief.

Just days before that near-miss, she had been part of a relay team that came together almost by accident, in which she clocked 42.30s as India B beat India A to set a national record in the mixed 4x100m relay at the International Invitational Relay and National Open Relay Competitions in Chandigarh. Interestingly, there was no long build-up, no carefully-planned combinations. In fact, she wasn't even supposed to travel to Chandigarh. "My entry wasn't there. At the last moment, the coach told me that I was going. The team itself was finalised barely a day before the race. Baton exchanges were practised just twice," she shares. There was little room for strategy and only enough time to agree on one thing – trust.

"We didn't think about winning. All four of us just trusted each other and ran our best. We didn't expect to win. In fact, it was unexpected, even for those on the track," she recalls. What followed was a performance that defied that lack of preparation. The quartet not only held their own but went on to set a national record, briefly pushing India into the World Championship qualification ranking 19th.

Much of that composure came from those around her. Her coach, Martin Owens, kept it simple – relay is not an 'individual' race. However, for Aiyappa, a sprinter, relays, aren't her usual space. "The outgoing runner has to trust the incoming runner completely," she says. That dynamic becomes even more complex in a mixed relay, where men and women alternate legs. For Aiyappa, who ran the second leg, the challenge was particularly sharp. "Boys are faster, so the timing has to be perfect." A 200m sprinter and hurdler, Aiyappa was brought into the team after a strong show in the 60m, which suggested she could handle the 100m leg. It was a call that paid off – but also one that threw up new questions about where she fits best.

Then came the disappointment. Despite their breakthrough run, the team fell just short of making the final cut for the World Championships. "We were ranked 25th. Only 24 teams qualified," she sighs. The margin is small, but in elite sport, it's everything. Since then, the focus has shifted inward. At a recent meet in New Delhi, she clocked 24.1 seconds in the 200m – close to her personal best – but pulled out of the 100m due to a hip flexor issue. A bout of illness didn't help either. "Right now, it's about getting healthy, doing my rehab, and strengthening my weak points."

Still, Aiyappa's relationship with athletics has never been built solely on outcomes. Growing up in Bengaluru, in a family where sport was part of everyday life, the track was as familiar as home – with her parents both being athletes. Her mother, Pramila Aiyappa, a double Olympian, remains her biggest inspiration. "I remember watching her on TV when she competed. Seeing her win made me want to be like her," she says, referring to the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Asian Games. The national record may have come unexpectedly, and the World Championship spot may have slipped away just as narrowly, but the takeaway is clear. But now 20-year-old Aiyappa has taken it sportingly and is busy building her body, rhythm, and her place in the sport.

> *I remember watching my mother [Pramila Aiyappa, a double Olympian] when she competed. Seeing her win made me want to be like her* —Unnathi Aiyappa, athlete

Hot Spot

YOUR GUIDE TO GETAWAYS AROUND THE CITY

Distance from B'luru: Approx. 85 km

Getting there: Accessible by private vehicle, bus and train

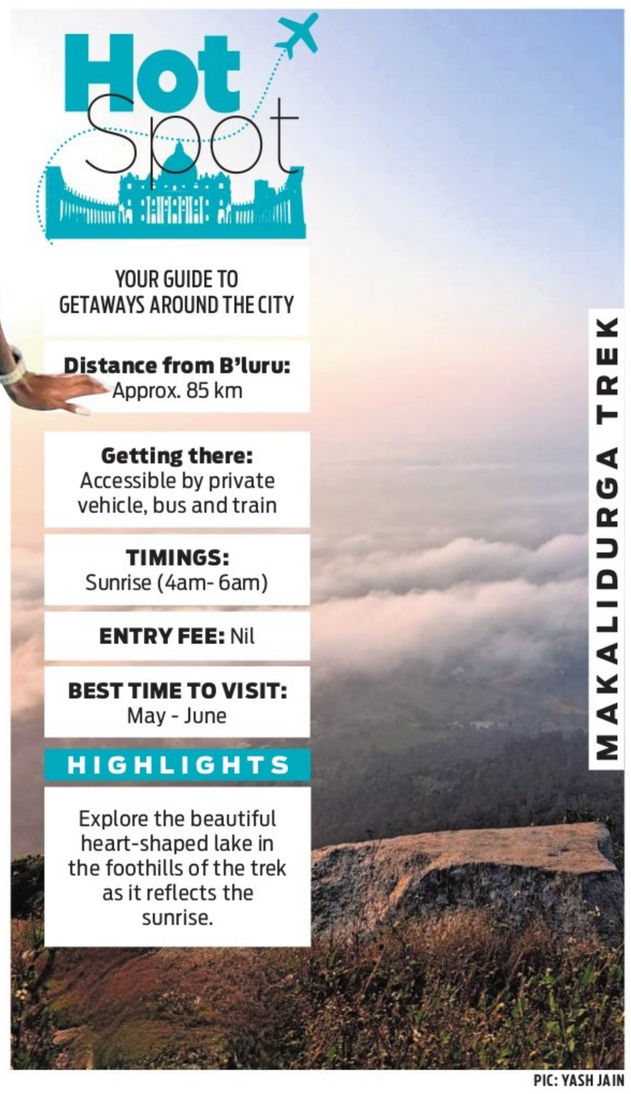
TIMINGS: Sunrise (4am- 6am)

ENTRY FEE: Nil

BEST TIME TO VISIT: May - June

HIGHLIGHTS

Explore the beautiful heart-shaped lake in the foothills of the trek as it reflects the sunrise.



PIC: YASH JAIN

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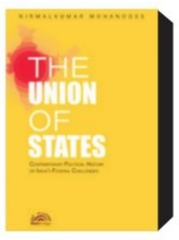
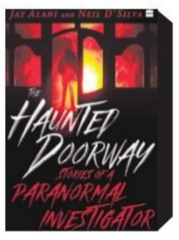


The Union Of States
by Nirmalkumar Mohandoss

With clarity and balance, this contemporary account traces the 'march of law' as the relationship between the union and its states encounters new tests.



The Haunted Doorway
by Jay Alani and Neil D'Silva

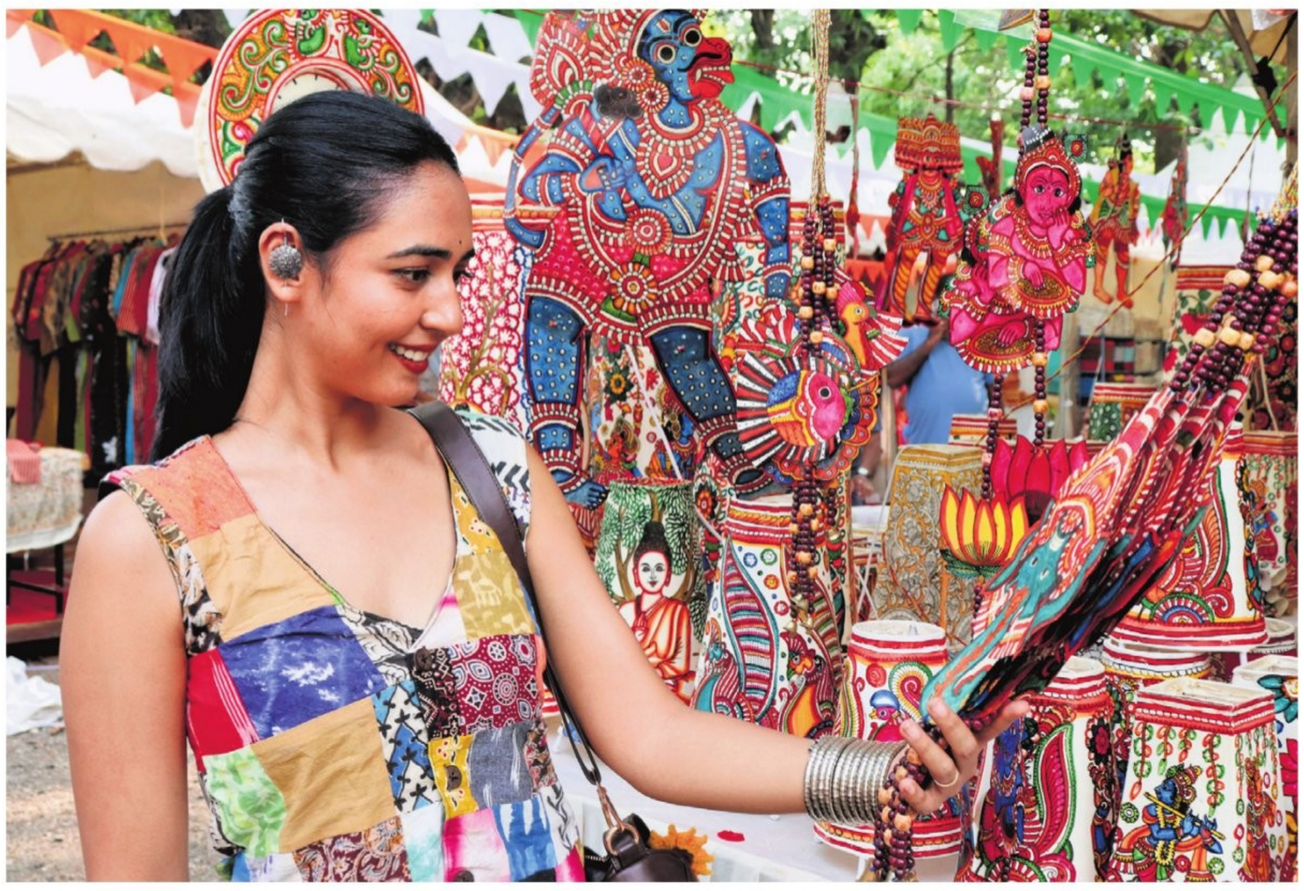
The Haunted Doorway combines a wealth of knowledge with fine wordcraft to form a collection of spine-chilling stories that are impossible to resist.

Maya: The Biography Of A Tiger
by Anant Sonawane

The intimate story of a tigress, Maya, one of the most beloved tigresses of Maharashtra's Tadoba, Andhari Tiger Reserve, who became a national icon.

Biting Off More Than I Can Chew: A Maverick Chef Remembers
by Rahul Akerkar

An unapologetically honest, sharply funny memoir of one of India's original culinary rebels.



HUEMAN TOUCH

Actor Hitha Chandrashekar admires the colourful leather puppets on sale at the ongoing The Indian Artisan Haat at Jayamahal Palace Hotel, Jayamahal Main Road | KEVIN NASHON

NOWSTREAMING

REGIONAL

GLORY (Hindi)

In a small-town boxing hub, two brothers investigate a shocking murder while navigating a troubled reunion with their father, a renowned coach.

Cast: Divyenndu, Pulkit Samrat, Suvinder Vicky

- **Watch on:** Netflix

FOREIGN

WUTHERING HEIGHTS (English)

Tragedy strikes when Heathcliff falls in love with Catherine Earnshaw, a woman from a wealthy family in 18th-century England.

Cast: Margot Robbie, Jacob Elordi, Alison Oliver

- **Watch on:** JioHotstar

THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS (Spanish, series)

Spanning a century, the Trueba family faces secret loves, revolution, and generational conflict between the tyrannical patriarch and his granddaughter, set against violent social upheaval.

Cast: Nicole Wallace, Alfonso Herrera, Dolores Fonzi

- **Watch on:** Amazon Prime Video

SUBSCRIPTION

Netflix :	₹ 199/month
Prime Video:	₹ 299/month
Jio Cinema:	₹ 999/year
Disney+ Hotstar:	₹ 899/year
Zee5 :	₹ 699/year
Viki Rakuten:	₹ 299/month
Aha:	₹ 699/year
SonyLIV:	₹ 299/month

FITBIT

HOW MUCH SALT IS TOO MUCH?

Salt is an essential part of our diet. It has various functions such as maintaining fluid balance, nerve balance and muscle activity. However, the modern diet includes more than the amount of salt required for our body. This can lead to serious health risks.

Here's a guide to understanding how much salt is too much and how you can manage it:

THE RECOMMENDED LIMIT

- The ideal intake is less than 5 grams of salt per day.
- This equals roughly 2,000 mg of sodium, the component in salt that affects health.
- Many people consume almost double this amount, often unknowingly.

WHY TOO MUCH SALT IS HARMFUL

- Excess salt increases blood pressure, a key risk factor for heart disease and stroke.
- It can lead to fluid retention, making the heart and kidneys work harder.
- Long-term high intake is linked to cardiovascular diseases and kidney issues.

RECOGNISE HIDDEN SOURCES OF SALT

- Over 70 per cent of salt intake comes from processed and packaged foods, not just added salt.
- Common high-salt items includes packaged snacks (chips, biscuits), processed meats (sausages, bacon), sauces and condiments (soy sauce, ketchup) and ready-to-eat meals.

SIMPLE WAYS TO REDUCE SALT INTAKE

- Cook more at home to control ingredients.
- Replace salt with herbs, spices, lemon or vinegar for flavour.
- Check food labels and look for low-sodium options.
- Gradually reduce salt while cooking to retrain your taste buds.
- Limit high-salt condiments and processed foods.

BALANCE SALT WITH BETTER NUTRITION

- Increase potassium-rich foods (fruits, vegetables, legumes), which help counter sodium's effects.
- Stay hydrated as adequate water helps maintain electrolyte balance.

Small changes can help significantly reduce health risks. By being mindful of hidden sources and making smarter food choices, one can strike the right balance and protect heart, kidneys and overall well-being.

By Madhura P Behki, nutrition expert, cult – a fitness and wellness platform

QUICKFIX

CHAKHAUNI

INGREDIENTS

- **Boiled chicken and/or boiled potatoes (cubed/shredded):** 1 cup
- **A pinch of sugar**
- **Garlic cloves (crushed):** 3-4
- **Basic masalas (chilli powder, cumin powder, etc.)**
- **Fresh coriander leaves (chopped, for garnish)**
- **Oil:** 1-2 tbsp
- **Red chillies:** 2-3 dried
- **Curd:** 1 cup
- **Salt to taste**

METHOD

- In a bowl, combine boiled chicken and/or potatoes with curd, sugar, salt and masalas. Mix well.
- Heat oil in a pan, add red chillies and garlic and saute until fragrant.
- Pour this hot tempering over the curd mixture.
- Mix lightly, garnish with fresh coriander, and serve with rice, bread or on its own.

Contributed by **Oindri Chakraborty ,** Kolkata

EXPRESS CONNECT

HAVE A RECIPE OR ART WORK TO SHARE, OR A QUESTION TO ASK?

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WHATWHENWHYWHERE

Qawwali Nights

Step into an evening of soulful music, culture and tradition with a grand celebration of Sufi heritage and melodies. Experience the magic of live Qawwali as artistes take the stage to create an atmosphere filled with devotion and rhythm.

WHEN: May 3, 1pm
WHERE: Swami Vivekananda Sports Ground, BTM Layout
DETAILS: district.in

Squash It!

This session offers newcomers a chance to experience squash firsthand, combining intense cardio and full-body strength training with skill-building and tactical play. It's an introduction to a fast-paced sport that challenges both mind and body.

WHEN: May 2, 3pm
WHERE: Indian School of Sports, Outer Ring Road
CALL: 70221 56403

Mixed Bag

Experience being a part of small groups of people sharing meaningful conversations, laughter and stories. Expect an evening of genuine connection, guided by a host and engaging ice-breaker games, where you become part of a shared experience rather than just an observer.

WHEN: May 2, 7.45pm
WHERE: CBD – Central Bar District, Old Airport Road
CALL: 85469 99966

Sacred Steps

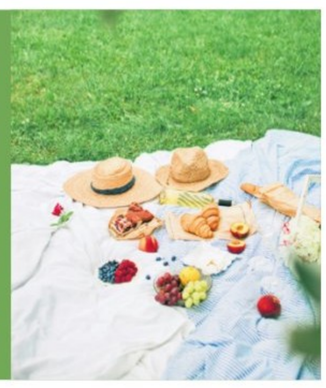
Are you looking for a sign to start learning dance? Explore the art of Indian Contemporary dance in this dance workshop, and learn about a movement style rooted in classical sensibilities.

WHEN: May 3, 10am onwards
WHERE: Jama The Studio, Jayanagar
CALL: 7349759930

Picnic Connections

Enjoy a picnic date that offers a relaxed, welcoming space where people can connect authentically amidst nature and good vibes. It's about sharing simple moments that spark lasting friendships without any pressure.

WHEN: May 2, 4.30pm
WHERE: Lalbagh West Gate, Rashtriya Vidyalaya Road
DETAILS: district.in



Punjabi Swaad

End the week with the authentic taste of Punjab. With rich Punjabi flavours in smoky tandoori delights, creamy curries and traditional desserts, relish the true essence of the Punjabi pind.

WHEN: May 2, 12.30pm onwards
WHERE: Brunchilly - Sarovar Portico, Marathahalli
CALL: 91485 91791

Musical Tribute

Witness a live tribute to **Krishnakumar Kunnuth** (KK) by a high octave band by Akash. Enjoy an exciting DJ night, mixing popular tracks and beats.

WHEN: May 2, 8pm
WHERE: Nusa, Whitefield
CALL: 99165 55499

ARTCORNER

PICTURESQUE WONDER

Bold strokes of poster colour capture the vivid beauty of this perched macaw, in this artwork by eight-year-old Thapaswi Prashanth. The rich reds, vibrant greens and deep blues create a contrast against the subtle background

SUMMER SERVINGS

SONU M KOTHARI

SUMMER often arrives with the familiarity of long, sun-drenched days with ever-rising temperatures, and a natural craving for food that feels light, healthy, hydrating, and refreshing. Salads are the answer. Additionally, this colourful concoction is also rich in vitamins, minerals, proteins, providing a number of health benefits.

Salads in all their vibrant glory turn into wholesome, satisfying meals that nourish. With fresh produce at its peak, summer salads are full of clean eating, balanced diet, and a way of eating food that keeps the body cool and energised through the city's heat.

Mukkani Salad by Gnanaselvi

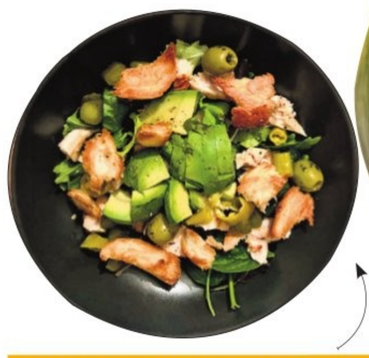
A traditional mukkani fruit salad packed with juicy mangoes, ripe bananas, and luscious jackfruit.

Ingredients

- Mango
- Banana
- Jackfruit
- Mixed nuts (Almonds/cashews)
- Honey (optional)

Method

Cut the mango and jackfruit into bite-sized pieces and slice the banana evenly. Add all the fruits to a serving bowl, and gently mix them together. Top with chopped mixed nuts for added crunch and flavour. Drizzle honey if desired. Serve chilled for a refreshing tropical treat.



Chicken Avo Salad by Olivia Daniel

Ingredients

- Grilled chicken: 200 g
- Mix lettuce: 200 g
- Avocado: 1
- Olives: 6-7, slivered
- Jalapeno: 6-7, slivered

For the dressing

- Mustard sauce: 2 tsp
- Lemon: 2
- Honey: 2 tsp
- Olive oil: 1 tsp
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Add all ingredients for the dressing in a bottle and shake well. In a bowl, add the lettuce mix to form a base layer. Add in the chicken evenly across the lettuce layer. Cut the avocado into small pieces and add them evenly. Add olives and jalapenos. Pour the salad dressing all over. For added crunch, add fun elements like crunchy bacon bits, fried or baked bread, potato chips, etc.

Mediterranean Salad by Olivia Daniel

Ingredients

- Salmon steak: 1 (Use any protein, such as fish, chicken, paneer)

For spice rub

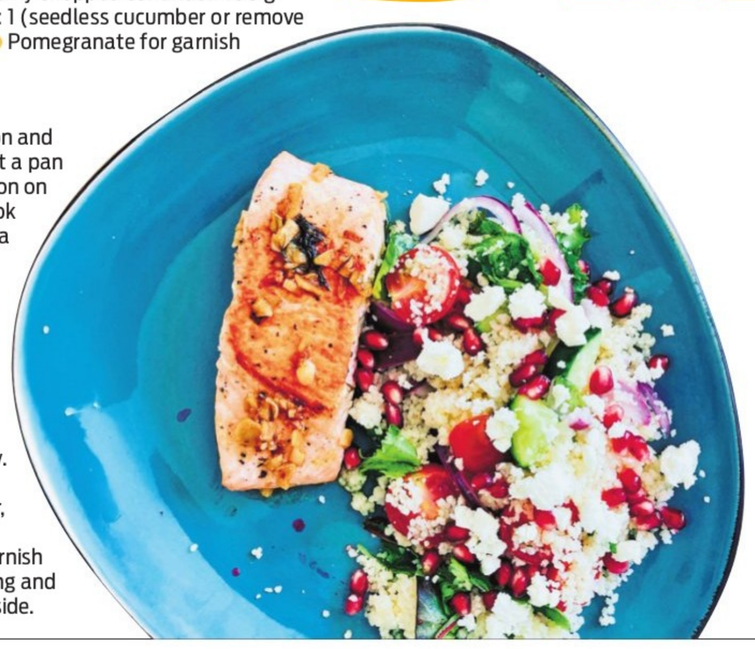
- Lemon: 1 • Paprika powder: 2 tsp • Cumin powder: 1 tsp
- Ginger-garlic paste: 1/2 tsp • Salt and pepper to taste

For the salad

- Couscous: 2 cups • Lemon: 2 • Rocket or Arugula leaves: 100 g
- Cherry tomato: 200 g • Freshly chopped coriander: 100 g
- Sliced onion: 1 • Cucumber: 1 (seedless cucumber or remove the seeds before chopping) • Pomegranate for garnish

Method

Add the spice rub to the salmon and let it marinate for 30 min. Heat a pan with 1 tp of oil. Place the salmon on high heat for a crispy base. Cook for 30 sec. Cover the pan with a lid and cook salmon for 3 min on either side. Squeeze half a lemon; add salt, pepper. Cook the couscous by boiling 2 cups of water with salt. Add 2 cups of couscous and turn off the heat. Cover pan with a lid. After 10 min, remove the lid and use a fork to make it fluffy. Squeeze the juice of 2 lemons. Add coriander, salt and pepper, cherry tomatoes and Arugula leaves and give a quick stir. Garnish with pomegranate while plating and serve with the salmon on the side.



Watermelon Paneer Salad by Gnanasingh Arputhadas

Fresh, hydrating, and flavourful – a perfect summer salad with watermelon, paneer and mint.

Ingredients

- Watermelon
- Paneer
- Fresh mint leaves
- Lemon juice
- Crushed black pepper

Method

Cut the watermelon and paneer into evenly-sized cubes. In a small bowl, mix lemon juice and crushed black pepper to prepare the dressing. Gently toss the watermelon, paneer and mint leaves with the lemon-pepper dressing. Serve chilled in a bowl or arrange on skewers for an elegant presentation.

Raw Mango, Chickpea & Avocado Salad by Vidhya Mudaliar

A vibrant medley of tangy raw mango, creamy avocado, and protein-rich chickpeas, bringing together freshness, crunch, and nourishment in every bite.

Ingredients

- Cucumber • Tomato • Raw mango • Capsicum
- Chickpeas (boiled or canned) • Avocado • Onion
- Lettuce • Olive oil • Lemon juice • Salt • Crushed black pepper • White sesame seeds • Slivered almonds
- Cheese of your choice (optional)

Method

Dice the avocado, onion, capsicum, cucumber, tomato and raw mango into evenly sized, bite-sized pieces. On a serving plate, spread a fresh bed of lettuce leaves. Arrange a layer of cucumber, followed by tomato, raw mango, capsicum, chickpeas, onion and avocado. Drizzle the olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper dressing evenly over the salad. Finish by garnishing with white sesame seeds and slivered almonds. Serve fresh for a crisp, zesty experience.

Grilled Peach Summer Salad by Olivia Daniel

- Chicken thigh: 1 • Garlic powder: 1 tsp • Chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Coriander powder: 2 tsp • Onion powder: 1 tsp • Lemon: 1
- Oil of your choice: 1 tsp • Mixed lettuce: 200 g • Onion: 1, sliced • Peach: 3-4 (You can also add grilled pineapples, or oranges or watermelon without grilling) • Cherry tomato: 200 g, cut into half vertically • Feta cheese: 100 g • For the dressing • Juice of 2 lemons • Honey: 2 tsp • Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Marinate the chicken in the spice rub for 20-30 minutes. On a grill, cook the chicken for 7-8 minutes or until the internal temperature of the chicken thigh reaches 165ºF. Slice the peaches vertically and remove the pit. Grill the peaches for 30 seconds only to attain the smoky flavour. Add the mixed lettuce to form a base. Followed by onions, grilled peaches and sliced cherry tomatoes. Add all the ingredients for the dressing in a bottle and shake them well. Pour the dressing over the salad and give it a good stir. Garnish with feta cheese and serve it with the chicken on the side.

SMARTADS

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THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

PUBLIC NOTICE
CHANGE OF NAME

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **SHAIJU. O. S.** S/o Sridharan Kadutha Residing at No. 8, Nirmalyam, Classic Residence Layout, S Bingipura Road, Near Flex India Pvt Ltd and Christ Academy School, Hulimangala PO, Bangalore-560010. Hereby solemnly declare that I have changed my name from **SHYJU.O.S.** to **SHAIJU. O. S.** vide affidavit dated.**28.04.2026** sworn to before Notary, **K.V.Mani,** Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **(OLD NAME) ASOKAN NAIR,** father of No.16114276Y, NK, SUGESH K, residing at Kunnath House, Kuruvattur (Vill), Payambra (Post), Kozhikode (Dist), KERALA (State), PIN: 673571, Have Changed my name to **(NEW NAME) ASOKAN V K** And **DOB** from **01.07.1957** to **05.10.1957** Vide Affidavit Dated 30.04.2026 Sworn Before Notary MEER HASSAN BANGALORE

AFFIDAVIT
I, **PREM LATA,** W/o. Anil Kumar, aged about 59 years, presently residing at B-602, Hoysala Phase-1, 20th Main 20th Cross, Sahakaranagar, Bangalore-560092, do hereby declare that my name as **PREM LATA** and **PREMLATA SEHRAWAT** all above mentioned names belongs to me & same person mentioned in various documents, vide affidavit dated 30.04.2026, sworn to before K.V. Nanjaiah, Advocate & Notary Public, Govt. of India, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **DEVI KUMARI alias DIVYA KUMAR**, W/o. Narpath Kumar G, residing at No. 43/2, 1st Floor, HB Samaja Road, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru-560004, have changed my name to **DIVYA DEVI,** hereafter I shall be known as **DIVYA DEVI** for all purposes vide affidavit dated 29.04.2026, sworn before notary Mohammed Hussain K, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **GOWRI V HEGDE,** W/o Sri V.G Hegde, aged about 53 years, R/at No.554, 63rd Cross, 5th Block, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560010, do here by declare that I have changed my name from **GOWRI BHAT** to **GOWRI V HEGDE** henceforth I shall be known and called as **GOWRI V HEGDE** for all purposes, vide affidavit dated 30/04/2026 sworn before Advocate and Notary **L. VEENA** at Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **BABITHA G S W/o Mr. Shrinivas D Deogirikar Resident of : #VH502, 5th Floor, Block-H, Leonardo Purva Venezia, Near Mother Dairy, Chikkabommasandra, Yelahanka New Town, Bengaluru-560064, have changed my name from BABITHA G S to SHEELA S DEOGIRIKAR** Affidavit Dated: 30-04-2026, sworn to before Notary Public S.R. RAVIKUMAR, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **B.MANJUNATHA**, S/o Basanna, aged about 46 years, R/at No.E/635, Behind Mahimappa School, Bengaluru North, Chokkasandra, T.Dasarahalli, Bengaluru-560057, have changed my name from **H.R.MANJUNATHA** S/o Ramabadrahia to **B.MANJUNATHA**, S/o Basanna,. Vide affidavit dated: 23-01-2026, sworn before Notary S. Jayanna, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **(OLD NAME) PREMA,** mother of No.16129128L, NK, AMARNATH KADEMANI, residing at House No.445, Panchakshari Nagar, 5th Cross, Gadag (Vill & Post), Gadag (Tehsil & Dist), KARNATAKA (State), PIN: 582101, Have Changed my name to **(NEW NAME) PREMA BASAVARAJ KADEMANI** And **DOB** from **01.06.1975** to **01.06.1978** Vide Affidavit Dated 30.04.2026 Sworn Before Notary MEER HASSAN BANGALORE

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **Rajan M.D,** S/o M.S David, aged about 66 years residing at No.2211, 16th Block, Janapriya Town Ship, Kadabagere Post, Bangalore-562130, declare that I, have changed my name to **Joseph Sebastian M.D**. vide Affidavit dated: 12-12-2023 sworn to before Advocate & Notary V. Rajashekhara at Bengaluru and vide certificate issued by the Kadamakkudy Village Office, Kanyannoor Taluk, Ernakulam, Government of Kerala. Henceforth I shall be known and called as Joseph Sebastian M.D for all my personal, practical purpose and legal purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME
We, **L SUNDAR RAJU,** S/o S Lakshmanan, aged about 36 years, and **Mrs. A MONICA,** W/o L Sundar Raju, aged about 35 years, both Residing at No.1/159, Maruthuvar Street, Eral Taluk, Kottarakkurichi, PO: Kottarakkurichi, Dist: Thoothukkudi, Tamil Nadu-628802, presently Residing at Bengaluru, state that our Minor Son's actual & correct Name is **S MITHUN,** D.O.B.- (08-07-2025) and not **S MITHUN SAMUEL,** vide Affidavit dated:30-04-2026, Sworn before Advocate & Notary Public, B.M. Chandrashekar, Bangalore. He shall be known & called as **S MITHUN,** only for all Official & Future Purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **PARAMESHWARA M C,** aged about 47 years, S/o Late Chandraiah Reddy V and Late Smt. Muniyamma, Resident at No. 135/7, Ganapa Nilaya, 14th A Cross, Vyalikaval, Malleshwaram, Bangalore-560003, do hereby declare that all the names i.e. **PARAMESHWARA M C, PARAMESWARA M C, M C PARAMESHWARA** and **MALLEKUPPA CHANDRAIAH REDDY PARAMESHWARA** are one and the same and refers to me only, henceforth I shall be known and called as **PARAMESHWARA M C** for all purposes, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2026 sworn before Advocate and Notary **VANAJAKSHI .R** at Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **SHIVETA MATTOO (DOB: 07-07-1977) W/o Mr. Sandeep Koul, Resident of : #A1202, Purva Venezia, Sandeep Unnikrishnan Road, Near Mother Dairy Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore-560064, have changed my name from SHIVETA MATTOO to SHWETA MATTOO** Affidavit Dated: 29-04-2026, sworn to before Notary Public G.P CHAYA Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **HARISH THIPPESWAMY (New Name),** S/o. Thippeswamy B K, Residing at No.15, 25th Main Road, 14th Cross, 1st Phase, J P Nagar, Bangalore South, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560078, India, declare that I have changed the name from **DR HARISH T (Old Name)** to **HARISH THIPPESWAMY (New Name).** Henceforth, I shall be known and called as **HARISH THIPPESWAMY (New Name)** only for all purpose, vide Affidavit dated : 29-04-2026, before Notary MOHAMMED HUSSAIN K, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **(OLD NAME) SINDHAV MANJULABEN RANVIRBHAI,** mother of No.JC-785063K, NB/SUB, SINDHAV VIJAYSINH, residing at House No.103, Galodar (Vill), Maliya Hatina (Tehsil), Galodar (Post), Junagadh (Dist), GUJARAT (State), PIN: 362245, Have Changed my name to **(NEW NAME) SINDHAV RAJBAIBEN RANVIRBHAI** And **DOB** from **01.06.1969** to **01.01.1969** Vide Affidavit Dated 29.04.2026 Sworn Before Notary MEER HASSAN BANGALORE

CHANGE OF NAME
I **Ambuja Valasa Reddy W/o Sri Narayana Reddy V.**, aged about 61 years, residing at No. 128, 3rd Cross, JR Layout, Haralur, Bengaluru South, HSR Layout, Bengaluru –560102, hereby declare that I formerly known as **Ambuja**, I have changed my name **Ambuja** to **Ambuja Valasa Reddy.** Henceforth, I shall be known and called as **Ambuja Valasa Reddy** for all purposes, including all official and legal records. Vide affidavit dated **29.04.2026** sworn in before **A.S.Narayana Reddy B.A.LLB** advocate and notary, Bangalore

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **SHEFALICA SHASHIDHAR,** Aged about 51 years, Presently Residing at: No. 553, 3rd Main Road, 2nd Stage, W.C.Road, Mahalakshmipuram, Bengaluru 560086, do hereby declare that I have change my name from **SHEFALICA SHASHIDHAR** to **SHEFALICA BANGALORE NAGESHCHANDRA,** vide affidavit dated 29.04.2026 sworn to before **SUMITHRA .N,** Advocate & Notary, Govt. of India. BENGALURU.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **NITIN KUMAR MAHINDRAKAR, S/o. Nagendra, residing at Flat No 213, Splendid Sree Durga Apartment, Junior College Road, Kadugodi, Near Janani Public School, Belathur, Belathur, Bengaluru 560067, I have changed my name to NITINKUMAR N MAHINDRAKAR** for all purposes affidavit dated 29/04/2026 sworn before advocate and notary K.C. Gowthami, Bangalore

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **Smt. Medhavini Suresh,** mother and legal guardian of Daksha Sai S/o Suresh Kumar G., aged about 14 years, R/at No.3, 1st Main, 4th Cross, 1st Floor, NR Begalamma Temple, Papareddy Palya, Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560072, have changed my son's name from "Daksha Sai to **"DAKSHA SAI SURESH KUMAR KHARVI"** wherein abbreviated name is **"Daksha Sai S.K."** and expanded name. **"DAKSHA SAI SURESH KUMAR KHARVI"** vide affidavit dated 23.02.2026 Sworn before Advocate and Notary S. Vijayakumar, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **(OLD NAME) RETHNAMMA,** mother of No.JC-314673Y, SUB, BINU KUMAR C, residing at Vinod Bhavan, Vayala (Post), Erathu (Vill), Adoor (TK), Pathanamthitta (Dist), KERALA (State), PIN: 691554, Have Changed my name to **NEW NAME) RATNAMMA** And **DOB** from **07.07.1955** to **01.01.1952** Vide Affidavit Dated 30.04.2026 Sworn Before Notary MEER HASSAN BANGALORE

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **MAHEK HEMANT BHANSALI,** D/o. Hemant Bhasali, resident of No. 814, 17th E Main Road, 5th Block, Bhashyam Circle, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560010, Karnataka, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from **MAHEK BHANSALI** to **MAHEK HEMANT BHANSALI,** vide affidavit dated 30.04.2026, sworn to before C.K. Anupama, Advocate & Notary public, Govt. of India, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME
I. **RAKHI SATYAVIR LAMBORIA,** D/o. SRI. SATYAVIR LAMBORIA, Present Residing at # XAVIER INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT& ENTREPRENEURSHIP Electronic City, Phase 2, Hosur Main Road, Bangalore - 560100, Permanent Address is at: #79, Kamley lay out, Amrawati Road, Near Hanuman Mandir, Dattewadi, Nagpur, Maharashtra - 440023, have correct my name from **RAKHI SATYAVIR LAMBORIYA** to **RAKHI SATYAVIR LAMBORIA,** vide affidavit dated 28/4/2026 sworn to before Jain Swarnamala Advocate and Notary Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **SHASHIKALA MANJUNATH,** D/o Obanna S M, aged about 31 years, R/at No.34/3, Sarala Nilaya, Chunchagatta Main road, Munneshwara temple, Near Beereshwara nagar, Konanakunte, Bangalore-560062, do here by declare that I have changed my name from **SHASHIKALA** to **SHASHIKALA MANJUNATH** henceforth I shall be known and called as **SHASHIKALA MANJUNATH** for all purposes, vide affidavit dated 30/04/2026 sworn before Advocate and Notary **MAHESHA .J.J** at Bengaluru

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Niwas Vasantrao Ghatge, son of Vasantrao Dadasaheb Ghatge residing at 204, Sowparnika Sai Mithra Apt. 7 MN, Maithry Lyt., Whitefield, Bengaluru-560066, hereby declare that **Niwas Vasantrao Ghatge and Niwas Vasantrao Ghatage** both the names belong to one and the same person i.e., myself only. And continue my name in future as **Niwas Vasantrao Ghatage** Vide Affidavit dated 31/03/2026 sworn before Advocate & Notary K. Krishnamurthy, Hoskote

DHRUVA SARJA STANDS TALL IN THIS UNCOMPROMISING AND LOUD WORLD

KD:THE DEVIL
Director: Prem
Cast: Dhruva Sarja, Reeshma Nanaiah, Sanjay Dutt, Shilpa Shetty, Ramesh Aravind, Ravichandran, Ravi Shankar, Suchendra Prasad, and Yash Shetty

RATING 3/5

A SHARADHAA

KNOWING whose film this is helps you understand what to expect. This is a Prem film, and it caters to his own strengths: big emotions, drawn-out conflicts, drama that holds nothing back, and a willingness to distort reality when it fits the moment, while still holding on to his signature sentiments. If you accept it on those terms, *KD: The Devil* makes sense. At the heart of it all is Dhruva Sarja, who focuses more on presence than nuance.

The story is set somewhere in the 1970s or 80s, where every entry feels like an event and every silence is soon filled with sound. Ravi Shankar, as a police officer at a wedding, quickly flashes back to explain Kaalidasa, but first we meet Deva (Sanjay Dutt). He is introduced like a story people already know and have chosen to believe. Even a simple kabaddi call becomes theatrical. He does not just enter scenes, he announces himself. This kind of a man whose presence arrives before his actions.

Then there is Kaalidasa (Dhruva Sarja), affectionately called Kaali, who runs a kerosene business in the area. While Deva is already a legend, Kaali is still in the making. He comes from the garadi, shaped by kusti, instinct, and a life not refined by education or structure. His anchor is his brother Dharma (Ramesh Aravind), a schoolteacher who brings order along with a quiet disappointment that lingers.

Their relationship looks simple on paper, yet it works. Kaali seeks approval without asking for it. Dharma worries but keeps his feelings to himself. They do not say much to each other, but you can sense what exists between them. The film often returns to this bond, even as everything else grows louder.

And there is Macchu Lakshmi (Reeshma Nanaiah) who comes with the volume the film revels in. A bold, fiery girl, who works in an agarbatti factory, she is sharp, vocal, and very much a part of this heightened world. Her dynamic with Kaali begins with tension and slowly evolves, but this is not a love story that stops to explain itself. It grows in bits and pieces, through stolen moments rather than big declarations.

The film also adds a political layer with V Ravichandran's intense Annayappa, a man with ambitions. Deva is also drawn toward power, creating a charged atmosphere, even if politics never becomes the film's main focus.

Yet beneath all this noise, one thread keeps resurfacing: admiration. Kaali does not just look up to Deva, he moulds himself around him, not to overpower him but to match him. Deva is not just a man in Kaali's world, he is a standard to measure against, something to strive for. That is where things begin to shift. Admiration does not remain still, it evolves and starts to push back.

Before that shift fully takes over, it is important to see what kind of film this is trying to be. Despite the underworld setting, this is not strictly an underworld story. Prem stays true to what he understands. At its core, this remains a drama about relationships and outcomes. The difference lies in scale. Everything is louder, bigger, and more pronounced. This approach works up to a point.

Kaali's journey moves from someone who looks up to someone else to someone who can stand his own ground. A small win in kusti is enough to shake the balance, not because it changes everything overnight, but because it alters how people perceive him. For Deva, that change brings discomfort. He is no longer just being followed, he is being evaluated.

This moment makes the film intriguing, even if it does not stay there long enough. Familiarity here does not bring comfort, it creates friction. It unsettles what once felt fixed.

From here, the film fully embraces its larger-than-life instincts. Conflicts escalate, emotions intensify, and the storytelling broadens. Prem does not hold anything back. He fully commits to the form. Yet, amidst all this noise, there is a sense that the film knows its direction. The loud moments are intentional, crafted for effect, waiting for a reaction.

The first half focuses on setting up the world, the relationships, and the subtle shifts between characters. At times, it feels drawn out. The romance unfolds slowly, conversations loop, and the narrative takes its time reaching its destination. But this groundwork enriches the second half, where the film gains more weight.

This is also where Dhruva Sarja truly shines. Kaali reveals more than just swagger. You catch glimpses of fear, playfulness, and unpredictability. These aspects are not fully explained, but they come through in specific moments. Dhruva navigates these shifts well, adding intensity to his character that is not always found in the writing.

Reeshma Nanaiah meets the demands of her role. However, it is Ramesh Aravind's surprising performance that adds a more dramatic edge than we typically see from him. Fitting seamlessly into the film's tone, he has an unassuming nature, with a subtle edge to it. Shilpa Shetty appears briefly, adding a hint of intrigue. Sanjay Dutt performs as he often does in these roles: controlled, steady, and aware of his presence. There is also Yash Shetty, Suchendra Prasad, among many others, contributing in their own way.

While dialogue writer Kraanthi's lines land during the film's mass moments, music by Arjun Janya is ever-present, sometimes overwhelmingly so. The background score often competes with dialogue instead of supporting it. The songs fit in, but the overall soundscape feels excessive. With rich production, the retro setup of Bengaluru provides a backdrop, often crowded with numerous characters and properties moving in and out. Visually, William David captures the era well while keeping the focus on Dhruva Sarja, ensuring his presence resonates as the film intends.

By the end, what stays is not just the conflict between Kaali and Deva, but the shift that led to it. What happens when someone you admire becomes someone you stand beside? Familiarity breeds contempt fits well here. What occurs when looking up shifts to looking straight ahead?

Prem explains this well, but there is a sense that this story is not finished yet. This feels like a part of something still being constructed. It leaves things open-ended, even as it moves toward something larger. The preclimax moments introduce Sudeep as Kaala Bhairava, a character who arrives with an aura of curiosity and purpose, carrying an idol and hinting at a broader world that still awaits.

Within what we see, Dhruva Sarja remains steady. He trusts the director's vision, embraces the scale, and brings layers to both the film and his character. Clearly, Prem has plans for a larger universe, especially with Sudeep entering the picture. There is also more to explore in Dhruva Sarja's role. *KD: The Devil* may not resolve everything it sets up, especially the undercurrent of brotherhood that runs through it, but it leaves enough in motion to suggest that, as they say, picture abhi baaki hai (the story is not finished yet).

Love Mocktail 3 announces OTT release date

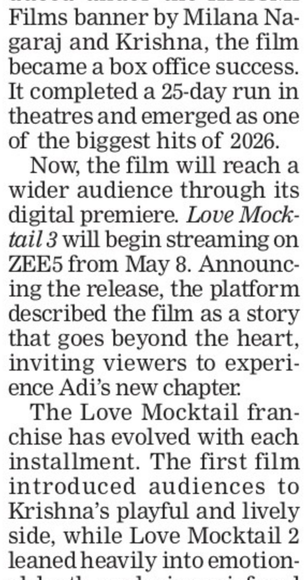
CE FEATURES

LOVE Mocktail 3, written, directed by, and starring Darling Krishna, has now locked its OTT release after a successful theatrical run. The film, which hit theatres on March 19, is the third instalment in the popular Love Mocktail franchise and continues the emotional journey of its central character, Adi. Produced under the KrissMi Films banner by Milana Nagaraj and Krishna, the film became a box office success. It completed a 25-day run in theatres and emerged as one of the biggest hits of 2026.

Now, the film will reach a wider audience through its digital premiere. *Love Mocktail 3* will begin streaming on ZEE5 from May 8. Announcing the release, the platform described the film as a story that goes beyond the heart, inviting viewers to experience Adi's new chapter.

The Love Mocktail franchise has evolved with each installment. The first film introduced audiences to Krishna's playful and lively side, while Love Mocktail 2 leaned heavily into emotional depth, exploring grief and loss. With *Love Mocktail 3*, viewers and critics have noted a shift towards maturity, portraying Krishna in a more grounded role as a father, adding a new layer to the character's arc.

The film features music composed by Nakul Abhyankar, and Shri Crazy Mindz as editor and DOP. The film also stars Rachel David, Amrutha Iyengar, Rajini Bharadwaj, Shwetha Prasad, Dileep Raj, Abhilash, and Samvruta, among others, in key roles.



A still from the film

Karen Kshiti Suvarna's debut film gets release date

Meanwhile, Karen heads to Cannes, premieres May 16, addresses World Woman Agenda 2026

Priyanka Upendra

CE FEATURES

AT 22, Karen Kshiti Suvarna is showing a lot of promise as her debut film, *September 21*, will premiere at Marché du Film at Cannes on May 16. After the global premiere, the film, starring Priyanka Upendra, will release in Indian cinemas on May 22.

Karen is set for a big moment as she heads to the Cannes Film Festival, where she will speak at the 'World Woman Cannes Agenda 2026'. She will share the stage with Moira Forbes and other global voices, marking a rare opportunity for a young filmmaker from Karnataka.

For Karen, this is not just a personal milestone. "I hope this platform inspires young filmmakers," she says, making it clear that her journey is also about encouraging others to think beyond boundaries.

With a background in Film, Television, and New Media Production, Karen first drew international attention with her short film Hide and Seek, which was screened at the Cannes World Film Festival and recognised at the Dadasaheb Phalke Awards. In 2024, she won the Best Female Debut Director award at the Dadasaheb Phalke Achievers Awards, placing her among promising new voices in Indian cinema.

The film also features Praveen Singh Sisodia, Zarina Wahab, Ajit Shidhaye, and Amit Behl in key roles, bringing together a strong ensemble. Karen takes a big stride with her debut film that tells a deeply emotional story centred on Alzheimer's disease and the struggles of caregivers.

Karen Kshiti Suvarna

A glossy retelling of the dreamers vs pragmatists tale

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA 2
Director: David Frankel
Cast: Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt, Stanley Tucci

RATING 3/5

PRASHANTH VALLAVAN

AT the beginning, after being unceremoniously laid off along with her coworkers, Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway) gives a heartfelt speech about the importance of journalism and why it still matters. You notice a spark in her eyes, as the light catches a hint of a tear at just the right angle. Towards the end, when Miranda Priestley (Meryl Streep) momentarily emerges from her shell and opens up to Andy, she speaks about all that she sacrificed over the years for her career. Miranda says, "I love to work, don't you?" And right at that moment, you could spot the same spark again, caught by just the smallest hint of a tear. The one powerful emotion that overwhelms and connects both these characters, and that which forms the heart of this story, is passion. Beneath its soft visuals, whimsical tone, quirky sense of humour, and the 'chick flick' tag, *The Devil Wears Prada 2* is essentially a modern, glossy retelling of the enduring tale of passion versus reality, tradition versus change, dreamers versus pragmatists.

Two decades after the events of the original, fate intertwines Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway), Miranda Priestley (Meryl Streep), Emily Charlton (Emily Blunt), and Nigel Kipling (Stanley Tucci) once more. Even though they lead vastly different lives now, little else seems to have changed in terms of characterisation. After an elaborate setup, the film moves through the all-too-familiar beats of the 'saving the farm' storytelling formula. Runway, the fashion magazine that connects all of them, is now facing the axe, and they should all work together to save it. All four primary characters get their moment to shine, but, as cliche as it may sound, Meryl Streep still ends up owning every frame she walks in. The cinematography leaves much to be desired, with its marked revulsion towards any sort of depth or contrast. The smooth, hazy, low-resolution look is characteristic of the OTT-era corporate filmmaking. There seems to be a conscious effort to make this thematically layered story as unsubtle and smooth-brain-friendly as possible. It is not enough to stage a scene in a hall with a giant fresco of 'The Last Supper', we also need to see the characters talk about the painting, how the central theme of the painting is 'betrayal', how it possibly hints at an oncoming betrayal, and for good measure, the camera pans from the painting to the dinner table, with Miranda sitting at the centre. The film flirts with a list of interesting and relevant themes, like the increasing erosion of artistry by digital media, the insufferable techbros, the all-consuming rise of technocapitalism, and fears of AI. It would have been interesting to see these themes explored further.

The film effectively shows dreamers of contrasting shades and their enduring fight against the agents of order, of capitalistic structures. You have a dreamer like Andy who rallies everyone to protect the dream through her boundless optimism and hopeless romanticism. But then, you also need dreamers like Miranda who defend artistic expression before they are invaded by the capitalists. You need the Mirandas of the world to look them in the eye and say, "You can never do this. You are not a visionary, you are just a vendor." It might have lacked the charm that made the original special, but *The Devil Wears Prada 2* is a respectable addition to a franchise, one which might still have more to say than just a passing commentary on Devils and their Pradas.

Soothing yet sloppy romantic-drama

EK DIN
Director: Sunil Pandey
Cast: Junaid Khan, Sai Pallavi, Kunal Kapoor

RATING 2.5/5

KARTIK BHARDWAJ

CREDIT where it's due. At a time when the Bollywood movie-goer can only choose between a macho-misogynistic actioner or a propaganda-piece posing as a truth- expose , *Ek Din* comes as a sweet respite. It's warm, fuzzy and feels like sipping on a marshmallow-dipped hot chocolate after you have had enough of that tongue-reddening spice. But the taste doesn't stay consistent, it oscillates between bland and saccharine. The film gets messy, clumsy and once the love-story gap is filled it starts to overstay its welcome.

Boy meets girl, boy seeks girl. When both Hindi films and the world are being inundated with men high on main character energy, *Ek Din* brings back the spectacle-donning awkward protagonist who sees and admires a girl from a distance. It can be cute or creepy depending upon the film genre. The generically-named Dinesh Kumar Srivastava aka Dino (Junaid Khan) is an IT-service engineer at a software company in Noida. He is a wallflower personality and the highlight of his day is seeing and daydreaming about the elusive Meera (Sai Pallavi). She, on the other hand, is seeing the company's head Nakul (Kunal Kapoor), a married man who constantly assures her that the divorce papers are on their way. At a company retreat in Japan, Dino stands in front of a fortune bell and wishes to be with Meera even just for a day. His wish comes true, however, it's not magical, but medical.

After being spurned by her boss/ boyfriend, a drunk and heartbroken Meera suffers an accident which afflicts her with Transient Global Amnesia (TGA), a short-term memory loss (Ghajini actor Aamir Khan serves as producer) which deletes the last two years of her life. The condition, however, lasts for just a day which she spends with Dino, who poses as her boyfriend. The catch is that once she gets her memories back, she will remember everything except the day she spent with him.

Ek Din is well-intentioned and its premise piques interest (the film is a remake of the 2016 Thai film One Day) but the narrative seems convoluted and convenient. I would have preferred a simple story of an under-confident boy who takes charge and brightens the day of a devastated girl, discovering love and himself in the mix. What we get is a protagonist who is a meek-geek, spewing up facts like he is ChatGPT but never really standing up for anything. Events happen for and around Dino while he stays the same, his character arc like a dead-straight line on an ECG machine. Junaid also plays him stiff and straight with no surprises.

The film's cozy charm dries off soon as plot holes pile up. At times it felt like a Japan tourism promotional with the country's trivia being served as unnecessary tidbits when they are not serving the story. Sai Pallavi, however, is magnetic. She plays the Japanophile Meera with such charming abandon, it's infectious. The camera can't get enough of her and she is incessantly watchable whenever she comes up on screen. Her performance also eclipses the film's flaws.

Like most Hindi films, *Ek Din* starts off decently but then starts losing confidence in its own storytelling devices. It drags, gets predictable, gets generic and desperately starts trying to find a suitable ending which can't come soon enough. The film seemed like a soothing ointment for all the violence and aggression that has been blaring out of the big screens recently. Even if it is not new, it felt nostalgic. It has a softness and like the critic Roger Ebert said: "films are empathy machines", *Ek Din* tries to be one. It's just that more than one cog is loose.